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JESUS

HENRI BARBUSSE

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JESUS

By
HENRI BARBUSSE, 1874-

Translated by SOLON LIBRESCOT
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I too have seen Jesus. He revealed himself to me in all the beauty of precision. I love him; I hold him to my heart; and I will champion him against others if needs be.

H. B.

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NOTE

In a subsequent volume—*In the Footsteps of Jesus the Just*—I shall set forth the documents, reasons, and deductions which inspired my attempt to penetrate into the true past, and to discover Jesus, the man divinely human, the man who was able, above all others, to understand men, to show their true position, and to be their guide.

We are only at the beginning of a period when independent criticism has gained the right to examine the origins of Christianity with objective realism, and to bring them to the light. Christian exegesis, in reality, is only a creation of yesterday. Already it has cleared away the ruins of this great question, and has undoubtedly revealed many errors, much scheming, and a great deal of falsehood. It is established today that the canonical Writings, and many Christian traditions which are consecrated both by orthodoxy and by official textbooks, are entitled historically to very little belief. In all the time since men have thought to record their annals, there is perhaps no case where superstition, supported by the usual restraints of the "Established Order," has combated history with such success, and during so long a time.

NOTE

I hold to the opinion of those who believe that an author has no right to treat such subjects imaginatively, in keeping merely with his personal tastes. An author, being a public man, must not deceive himself, for when he deceives himself, he deceives others. It is his duty to examine, test, and verify everything which passes through his head, before expressing it; and, when he undertakes to copy a Personage out of the past, he must be faithful to his model.

However, in the case of the profound prophet of Galilee, who never knew what would be done with him, nor the fabulous glory in which he would be enveloped through the ages; and who was utilized, body and soul, for other ends than his own—I claim that scientific criticism can find his living figure in the Gospels by the same sort of inductions which have led to finding that of Socrates among the elaborate developments of Plato's Dialogues.

If I have taken certain liberties with accepted tradition, it was only because my hypotheses seemed in each case to have a greater appearance of reality and to approach more closely to the truth. However, I believe that I have never lost sight of a conception whose reality is attested, not by scholastics and catechisms, but by the simple unfolding of spiritual truths: I mean that in the eighth century of the Roman era,

NOTE

there came a man who grasped all human misery, suffering, and greatness, and held them up in his hands that all might see.

This also I should like to add:

These matters belong, not to the past, but to the present and to all time.

When I read and reread the Sacred Books, day and night, and when I studied so many of the works which have been written on the Dogma, it was not for the artistic joy of reconstructing the past, and of trying, like an archæologist, to find a Gospel without blemish or contradiction—the gospel of restitution.

My purpose was rather to address myself to the restless and tormented spirits of our own age—an age in which the march of economic and social events, of political and moral events, is inciting man to follow a sacred example which he has been permitted only to glimpse, and to become a breaker of idols.

My purpose was to display, for the sake of all those who live in waiting, the great parallel which can be rigorously drawn between the decadence of our own world, now at its summit of material progress, and that of the ancient world; between the beginnings of Christianity and the new levers which are setting themselves to raise the universe.

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NOTE

So as not to overburden every page of this book, I have refrained from noting the origin of the quotations which abound in the text. A great number of these can be found in the Old and New Testaments. The others are taken from a certain number of deuterocanonical, or apocryphal, or "annexed" books and texts—the Gospel of Peter, the Protevangel of James, the Gospel of Thomas (or of the Boyhood), the Papyrus of Oxyrhynchos, the Doctrine of Addai, the Acts of Thomas, various Syrio-Palestinian documents and extra-canonical manuscripts (notably those of the Codex Cantabrigiensis), the uncanonical sayings of Jesus as reported by Clement of Alexandria, Origen, St. Augustine, the pseudo-Cyprian, the pseudo-Clement of Rome, scattered Eastern traditions (Ephraem Syrus, etc.), and the Koran; finally Jewish pre-Christian literature: the Ascension of Isaiah, the Book of Enoch, the Sibylline Oracles, etc.

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Many of the expressions which will be found in this book belong to the modern world. I hope that the reader will not attribute these verbal anachronisms to the ignorance of the author. When I refer to ideas or things by words which are false to local color, I am only conforming to the tradition of the accepted translators of the Scriptures. It is evident that these

NOTE

terms, in spite of their novelty, designate the former equivalents of the ideas and things in question—much better than could obsolete technical phrases, or figurative expressions which would only complicate the style.

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CHAPTER I

RICHES LIE IN THE DEPTHS

THE good tidings of Jesus, son of Mary.

There was a man called Matthew, and there was one called John, who saw him, it is said, and spoke of him. There were Luke and Mark also, who heard of him, it is said, through the mouth of Simon Peter, and spoke of him. There were others who spoke of him after having seen him, or without having seen him. The words remain, but the things are not certain.

Now it is Jesus himself whose voice is heard through the myriads of words that were said about him.

For there is only one truth, and it belongs to us all.

* *

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Each morning I woke in the little corner of the house where they had placed my bed, for I was a child.

Often on waking I was lost in the mists of a dream, and said to myself, "Let me see, who am I?"

Then something clear would take shape in the dark mists of my dream; it was the little square window through which one could see the enormous village. My eyes were creating the objects about me. In the larger room which joined the one where I slept, I saw my mother cleaning the hearthstone, on her knees. Then I knew that I was Jesus, the son of Mary.

I could see her kneeling in the other room because there was no door. Our house was small, and she could have heard me at that moment, even if I spoke in a low voice. But I did not stir until I was fully awake. Nor until I had inspected every cranny in our thick gray wall, and the red pitcher sitting heavily on the window-ledge. Nor until I had counted my clothes that were strewn on the chest.

I could not go out of doors as I wished to

RICHES LIE IN THE DEPTHS

do, now that the morning had brought me back to life; for I was a carpenter like my father. I would hardly have finished eating, and the room still echoed with the noise made by me and the porringer together, when I went to work at my father's side. It was in a courtyard. My father would say to me, "Here, do this or that, like me." Then I would do badly and with pain the things he did easily and well, and so it would be till I was grown to his size.

But often he would say to me, "Go outside." This he said because of my age.

Then I went roaming through the plains and the stony valleys, setting my face toward the mountains which always withdrew, marching before me with the stride of giants.

The mountains beyond the sea were of pitch, black and shining, from which the sun tore handfuls of white. They forced me to stare at them, for there was nothing bigger in the world.

Whence do I come, whither do I go, and who am I? These things I do not know. But still, to the disorder of great stones and forests, I prefer gardens ranged like bright pictures, vine-

JESUS

yards which seem conscious beings, the earth with its poor furrowed belly.

And I prefer houses to gardens, and always I return to the place where houses are.

Everything in the village proclaims its nature. Here are gray squares with palms waving above them, and here are the stony streets which say, "If we are dead, no matter; each passing hour kills us." Here is the fountain, with its white stone that bathes in the water and becomes a mass of little white pebbles in the water. Here are the cries of children working at their play, and women with blue veils which are so bathed in sunlight that they become torn strips of sky. And here on the bright soil the sun designs, like an army of hands, the black leaves of the immense round fig-tree which nods as if it were the head of the village. Sometimes one house, among all the houses, is filled with sound and is all astir, save the walls, under its palm-tree; and at such moments they say, "Jemuel is dead," or perhaps, "Zohar is taking a wife." But from a distance the house where something takes place is perfect in its calm. Such is our village.

RICHES LIE IN THE DEPTHS

My heart yearns toward our own house, the house of my bread.

Our house is an old servant.

At home, my mother is always busy with her tasks. She hastens, and sighs as she hastens. She is burdened with her duties as a mother, because all the cares of the household rest on her shoulders, and because she loves this responsibility, and because the meals must be prepared, and because there is always something to be cleaned.

My mother, so humble, showed me the stable one day, and murmured, "This is where you were born."

There, one night. The straw, the earth, and in the blackness above, the stars.

My mother is always sighing. She crouches in a corner, bent, tired out.

Her dark face that wrinkles under the dark veil, her Jewish features, her dusty toes.

Her blood flowing, flowing through her veins.

My father is very old. Sometimes his head moves of itself, and he is very saving of words. He insists that we be clean and get rid of dirt, for he says that cleanliness is a good beginning.

JESUS

These countless years he has been a carpenter. He is so much a carpenter that his hands are of wood.

* *

And I prefer the poor to other men.

One day an old man coming from a mountain, and going to another mountain—for grown men can reach the mountains—besought our hospitality before he went on. He seemed bigger than we. He carried with him the secret of unknown men, whom yet one knows. And where he sat, there by our doorstep, was the place of a temple.

He was so horrible that he was ugly. His shadow was dirty. He could not speak.

His soul was paralyzed for lack of words.

Words were only in his eyes and in his gestures.

And one saw the value of words by the gap they left.

* *

But among all creatures, my heart turns to the beasts.

I say this because it is so.

RICHES LIE IN THE DEPTHS

I cast my eyes on them before daring to look at the faces of children and men.

In the morning they are hungry and cry out.

They say evident things. They are our new-born truth. They are among the just.

And standing between the sun and the manger, while a sheaf of straw on the ground flamed with sunlight, I spoke to the ass, saying, "You are some one very poor, the color of ashes. You stretch forth your head, and the tip of your muzzle is a negro. Your legs are short and your feet are only heels. Your skin is worn out. Sometimes it moves on your back and your round belly as if a hand were beneath it. We are as ignorant one as the other. But my own ignorance is thick; yours is transparent.

"We also cry out. But we, who know too much, are never certain of our desires.

"Here below, we are the rich and you the poor. But we are poor in the midst of our riches, and you rich in your poverty."

And the ass saw my hand as it moved toward his head, and he was troubled because he had no hand. His sin was that he could not speak.

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The old man of whom I said, if you remember, that he came from the mountain and set his foot on our doorstep before he went on, had a dog to guide him, for his eyes hardly could open in the ruins of his face.

An old dog whose hide was rusted away, who was clothed in lumps of dust, and who had nothing on earth except this tattered cloak. He looked at the man and found him perfect, for the dog bore only one image in his heart.

My eyes rested more on him than on the man. For I did not know the man, but I saw the dog.

And having seen that he was wounded in the flank, and bled, my understanding deepened suddenly. Within, I bled more than the dog. Our wound was a bond between us, and I drew near, while he looked at me as if to say, "You kneel when you speak to me."

I did nothing. He lay there, old as the stones and young as life. I did nothing, yet merely to understand is to do something.

And here, before the little houses which huddle in the distance, is this little lamb all made of whiteness.

RICHES LIE IN THE DEPTHS

And the grasshopper which says, "The earth
flings you into the air."

And every small bird which has wings

And says, "The sky is thick,"

And which is a bell.

Animals are definite in their lives, as men are
definite only in the face of death.

Because, as I told you, our ignorance is made
of night and theirs of day.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the
kingdom of heaven.

CHAPTER II

THE UNKNOWN KINDRED

AND I prefer evening to day. Evening obliterates, among us all, the superficial things. It levels the barriers we see, and the evil wealth of the hours, and all the coverings of day. It is something less. I prefer evening: the poor light.

Which restores.

The modest night reveals the truth. And our hearts are bared in these very shadows.

This colorless presence is a vision of greater power than the Burning Bush which was seen on the mountain by the Father of our fathers.

When Moses, all tremulous at first, did not dare to consider what it was.

And when I am told in the light of the day, "Worship this or that," I sometimes say to myself, as soon as darkness has come near me to wash away the light:

"No." Because I see that this or that is false.

THE UNKNOWN KINDRED

As I was returning at dusk to my mother and father, I saw a boy of about my age, standing not far from our door. He was very thin, and his clothes were tattered.

He asked me, "Do you love your parents above all else?" I answered that I did. He cried, "No!"

And it seemed that our clash was deep as the extraordinary roots which we have in the earth. Then he disappeared. He had been only a voice that said, No.

Afterwards, I knew that he was John, son of Zacharias.

* *

Now, we were gathered by the hearth in the twilight.

I could still see indistinctly my father's nodding head, and my mother's shoulders bending under the weight of the day.

It was too dark to work in the room, and we spoke aimlessly. My parents talked about the neighbors, and the neighbors' neighbors, and about all the people of the village. And they criticized them or envied them, saying, "Thad-

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deus has done this, and see what Sapphira has done. Why should we not do likewise?"

And I saw clearly that families are narrow conspiracies set one against the other; that herein lies the seed of strife and greed.

And night began to darken the door of the room. Night, in truth, opened this door by blending it with everything. And, through the open door, it seemed that I was leaving the house and going toward my kindred; those of all space and of all time.

My father, my mother, you are probably not my proper family. Outside this house, outside the village, there are people who are nearer to me than you, and are not as yet my kindred. I did not come to you freely. This man who comes toward me is my brother. And tries to be my brother, before having a name. When I say, "My brother," I am calling to him from afar.

Does all come from me, even my bonds of parentage?

In the morning, I looked for John Zacharias to thank him. Had he not spoken, I would not have dared to believe that which I believed.

CHAPTER III

THE READER AND THE WORD

THE Reader who is standing among his scholars in the marketplace, unfolds all science and all events from his book, and displays them like an assortment of very little toys.

It is necessary for children to learn the world, each child being the Messiah of a man.

And the large fig-tree looks on without looking, and meanwhile marches across the earth with its shadow.

And so the Reader is like a showman moving his puppets.

He explains that there is little here below save the Hebrew people, and that to study the science of another race is more sinful than to raise pigs.

He is so Jewish that his nationality is a disease. Teaching the Law, he makes the pupils repeat after him, "Caphtor, Kittim, Ophir."

And in order to learn these words, and learn

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to read, the pupils repeat them ten times, twenty times, in succession.

Now a Roman who was friendly to the Jews, because he was a good man, although a Roman, drew near with his clean-shaven face, and said, "What are these names?"

The teacher of the pupils gravely replied, "They are distant cities."

The Roman lord declared, "They never existed anywhere."

As answer, the Reader pointed them out to him, in the book.

To me his finger showed that letters are a meagre sort of idol.

For we write that which we believe. Afterwards we believe that which is written. Speech is a creature which has its day, and dies like all that lives. And books are cemeteries of the spoken word.

Written words are burnt words.

And truth, which has need of words, loves them, but words hate the truth.

And his finger showed me also that the books which tell the great story of man's sorrows, and

THE READER AND THE WORD

those who read them aloud, teach the little things and not the big.

The little things, namely: the kings who were or were not, or who were no longer, and the cities which passed away like rivers, and the names which passed like the wind, from the unknown to the unknown.

And not the big things, namely that everywhere and always man is man, in the same fashion.

CHAPTER IV

THE DAY OF REVOLUTION

THOSE who can speak with eloquence arise in the synagogue.

I am little, and can only talk in a low tone.

But already I can listen with authority.

And sitting, I bend my head to listen. My hand rests on my knee and I stare at a wound on one finger, where the plane had cut into the flesh.

Then raising my eyes, I see that which I hear.

In the world outside the synagogue, one could tell the Jews from other men and women only by their color, their rolling eyes, their thick fingers. Here, one could see the heart of the race.

The virtue of the believer is to fear God.

By the fear of God we are huddled together in this place, and out of the fear of God we have made a crown.

* *

THE DAY OF REVOLUTION

They speak. I am thinking of the great days of Nehemiah.

Because that is the period in our history on which I like best to dwell.

When the little band of the companions of Ezra came from Babylon to Jerusalem, and found that the generation of the Temple had forgotten the Law, and when Ezra, in despair, confessed the common sin before the people, and when Israel repented wholly and built its destiny anew on the ruins of its impious happiness.

This new beginning was hard and great. And yet, in the joy of accomplishment, Jerusalem during seven days adorned itself with branches. Tabernacles of olive branches, of myrtles and palms, sprang up everywhere: on the roofs of the houses, in the courtyards, on the porch of the Temple.

For Israel has a great power of repentance and regeneration.

And an eternal spring is in its entrails.

It falls into sin, but is strong enough to rise again.

And its remorse is pitiless.

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And it is thereby a rectitude among the nations.

And to-day, we are again at a grave hour in our common tragedy.

From all sides, to-day, the great tidings resound:

That the days are near, and the old world will die its death.

And they say that it is the end of times, and the hour of the Revolution, and that, in the twilight of the earth, the rainbow of justice will break forth.

And raising their heads, they live the consolation of Israel.

For, the Eternal will roar from Zion, and the Lord of Justice will overthrow the kingdoms of the earth, the glory of which is from Satan, and will make a great decrease on the earth. This was announced to us in precepts of the angels.

For lowest of all, they say, is the abyss, then the dungeon of the dead, then the earth where men pass their days, then the air, and the firmament furrowed by Satan and his Princes, then

THE DAY OF REVOLUTION

seven unheard-of heavens, peopled by millions of angels, and Powers and Dominations round the seven thrones. And from the peak of the seventh heaven the Messiah will detach himself, incandescent fragment of the only Throne. He will fall to the earth, then will arise in a blaze across the universal Pleroma.

The heavenly Messiah will have a scythe and the earth will be harvested. He will pursue the guilty man: If he drown in the ocean, saith the Lord, I will order the monster to fish him out; if he mingle with other men, I will command the sword for his throat; if he climb to Heaven, I will cast him down; if he descend into the tomb, I will draw him out therefrom.

Kingdoms will crumble away. The rulers of the nations will make them howl with pain. The skies will pass. And all the isles of the sea will take flight, and the mountains will no more be found. It will be a day of exasperation and anguish, when the sun will grow dark, when riders and phantoms will clash in the high clouds of the sky. For on that day, the earth will give

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up its dead and Hell will render that which it owes.

And the hero of the Revolution will begin a new era in which Israel will be raised above the eagles. And the stars will shine seven times more on the just, and the Eternal will make us a covenant of happiness.

Such is the dream which our people dream (for the dreams of a people, like the dreams of a man, are made with fragments of themselves.

We whose hopes have one by one been shattered, are the people of hope, the people-man.

Misfortune has made us what we are, to eternity.

And such is our cry, the cry of those who still are sleeping.

* *

In the streets through which I pass to return home, the setting sun is stretched out at full length. The people are thinking of the Revolution.

And one says, "Do you think that the Revolution will really come?" And the other says, "We are told it will come to-morrow."

THE DAY OF REVOLUTION

And all, searching the depths of the skies, fix their eyes on the sun, the court of justice of the world.

But each is thinking also of his own business, his daily task, his family. For we have many hopes at the same time, and they differ in respect to their distance.

And, in crossing the square where the scholars were, I saw that they were fearful and sleepy under the eyes of their teacher, for they were blinking their eyes and yawning, and I heard them repeat together, "Caphtor, Kittim, Ophir."

For we live by minutes, drop by drop.

And round the great fig-tree of the market-place, there is a smaller fig-tree in front of each door.

The fruits of which are as warm as one's hand.

Each of these fig-trees enters into the life of the family to which it belongs.

One evening among evenings, one which no one will remember and which will be lost, drowsing I asked myself, "What do I want?"

In my spirit there is a stirring which is like the Revolution.

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The great abyss of my fathers cries out within me.

We are made to do something just.

We are made to undo that which is unjust.

It is written, "I will lay righteousness to the line, and make of justice a level.

"And a torrent!"

CHAPTER V

THE INEXPLICABLE BROTHER

THEY point him out with their fingers; they glorify him, saying, "Rabbi, Rabbi. . . ." They tell me, "Listen to this man, my child, and be like him. He is a wise teacher."

I answer, "No."

For such a trust is idolatry.

The authority of my master must be conferred on him by myself, and not by hearsay.

Always man must remake the whole of himself, his faith, his certainties.

And his trust in another.

His trust, which is to say, the great wealth he has when he has nothing.

It is not by a proper name that he should be moved, but by the simple speech of the people of words.

It is not the sacred master I must follow.

It is he.

JESUS

My inexplicable brother.

He came to me.

He was like me, and of my own height: John,
son of Zebedee.

And I came also to him.

We drew apart from the world of men, one
toward the other.

And spoke each to each.

Speech in itself is a person.

Our real presence is in our speech with a
friend.

We have need of you that listen in order to be
truly ourselves and to recognize ourselves.

When you are there, I stand between us two.

The words you speak are sweet to my lips.

When I see you sleeping, still and closed in
slumber, so that your presence is no longer your
presence, I fear the moments as they pass.

For what is sleep, but the springtime of death?

Through you, I make over my opinions.
Through you, I make over my heart, and invent
my joys, and am my prophet.

And for all that, I render you thanks.

* *

THE INEXPLICABLE BROTHER

When I saw John, son of Zebedee, I hastened to tell him all that I knew, saying:

“Even if we are poor and lost among the poor, it is our privilege to see royally.

“And to render to ourselves that which we have given to space.

“And we are made for speech.

“I see John emerging from the distance, or from the blue corner of the room, or from the white and black turning of the street; he is looking toward me; he will speak to me.

“I love him, with all the unknown depths of my heart.

“There is another light.

“Which is not that of the sky.

“Which is in our minds and upon our faces.

“I am but the son of the man of whom God has said, I will make thy face strong against their faces.

“But when will they recognize me, and say of me, Behold, a man?”

CHAPTER VI

THE CROWN

A LONG the wall was a bench of stone. And above it was a thorn-tree, and whoever was seated on the bench (there was room for two) had a crown of thorns above his head.

It was there, sometimes of an evening, that I would find the other John, John Zacharias.

And there also that I told him once, "Nothing will be accomplished, save in joy."

"Yes," he answered, "in joy and in anguish."

"What do you mean? Can anything good be done with a sad heart?"

"I did not speak of being sad. I spoke of suffering."

"No," said I. "For things should come to pass of their own grace, and in tranquillity, and events should be, as it were, the dance of things."

He answered, "No! Everything is born in

THE CROWN

labor, and tears itself free, and causes pain to the laborer and to the world."

I said, "Peace will be made by peace."

He answered, "No."

"There are," I said, "those who use violence, and those who use gentleness."

"No, there are only those who are right and those who are wrong."

I was ill-pleased, and having risen, I started to go away. For the shadow of that corner made me shiver with cold.

"Where are you going, my brother?"

"Toward the work of peace."

Once again he said, "No." Then, as I strode away, he said, "When many days have been lost, you will return here, one day."

CHAPTER VII

THE DOOR TO THE WORLD

THE journey to Jerusalem.

On the road to Jerusalem, there are plains and mountains to be crossed.

And there are many other plains and many other mountains in the world.

My house is the village of the village. But my country is only the village of the Earth.

In the place which is between the sea and Ephraim, we saw a goddess Ashtoreth, fashioned of wood, in the park of a Syrian, Ananias by name.

This goddess, which was perfect in form, was clothed in a great blue mantle full of stars. She wore a golden crown. She held in her arms a little sacred child; he also was perfect, and crowned with gold. And over them was the sacred bird. All this, blue and gold, in the grove of Ananias.

THE DOOR TO THE WORLD

We passed before this grove; and in our company were my older companions of the journey, and my father, and especially there was my mother, with whom I walked in the rear.

All the Jews turned sharply away from the idol.

And my mother likewise.

But more gently.

And my mother sighed and said, "It is pretty! She is very lucky."

At the same time turning away, for she was a good Jewess.

Abishai, who was a Carmelite, said, "One day (may it be accursed!) I saw idolaters making oblations, and before the altar there was a priest of Persia, who presented a cup, and drank; and presented a wafer baked of unleavened flour and swallowed it, saying, "This is the body of God, who is Mithra, that I swallow in this fashion."

Piously, we all spat in the road.

* *

The Temple.

For the first time, I saw its great square face.

JESUS

It was new, and more than new, being not yet completed.

I entered into this temple which the supplicant tries to fill with his own spirit.

And whose vast emptiness echoes with past ceremonies.

Into the Temple came scribes, priests, sacrificers, who dogmatized and debated.

And said that astronomy was taught by Abraham to Babylon and Egypt, and philosophy by Moses to the Greeks.

And there came also a man called Elkaniah, who was a great doctor in Israel.

This Elkaniah said, "There were first the interminable Egyptians, then the contemptuous Greeks.

"Whose gods are in great disorder among themselves.

"For they are the work of poets who know only enough to know everything by half, and to flutter round the truth.

"And to play elaborate and graceful games on the surface of things. And they content themselves with a little; they content themselves with

THE DOOR TO THE WORLD

the smile of appearances and the harvest of the present moment. And they stop their gaps with eloquence and poetry, and with the semblance of clarity.

“But during this time, humanity is cut up into pieces, and human bodies continue to suffer and to be violated.

“There was Plato, who built a radiant universe on the humanity of a sage called Socrates.

“But he did this on the plane of Heaven, not on the plane of life.

“There were the Romans, who seemed like men carved after the image of the Greeks, but carved in too rigid lines; and they are only the lords of commerce and legislation.

“But there is the God of Israel, who is embodied justice over the world!”

* *

Now my father and my mother were seeking me everywhere, because I had returned to the Temple as they were going away, and had stayed behind to listen to the doctors.

And my mother having said to my father, “I tell you that he went in;” and my father having

JESUS

answered, "Then, let us go fetch him," they returned to the Temple, and they entered with their bundles at the moment when the scribes and the priests, having seen me as I listened, were questioning me.

And at the moment when I answered:

"There are idols everywhere which must be overthrown."

These men asked me, "If some one tells you, worship this or that? . . ."

I said, "I will answer, No!"

"Even if it be worthy of worship?"

"I will begin by answering, No. And afterwards, I will inquire as to its worthiness of worship."

Elkaniah then said this about me, "In this child is the great soul of Israel.

"For always one must wholly make over one's heart."

So his voice filled the Temple with the word which I had already spoken to myself.

And this word was established forever.

That my intention might always be a begin-

THE DOOR TO THE WORLD

ning into which I would fall, like the armed gesture of Abraham!

* *

On the homeward journey, at the corner where a road leads toward Ephratah, which is Bethlehem, I took profit of the sun, and said to myself, "It is sweet to pluck life with one's eyes."

But I regretted this joy, for a blind man was passing.

Poor man, why do you suffer?

"Because of the silence which I sow. Because the laughter of others flees before me like birds, and always escapes me."

I asked him, "What do you desire?"

The blind one answered, "That you should smile at me."

He raised his forehead that shone in the glare of the sun, and I trembled before him, who, more than I, knew and loved the light.

And I understood why those who have seen justice are the most persecuted and beaten down.

All the temples which crowd the earth make the temple which is destroyed the home of light.

And the just are those who are mutilated.

JESUS

And there were people who, with their eyes open, looked at the blind man, and saw nothing of this.

Later, on the homeward journey, being tired, I bowed my head.

On account of the sacrifices which I had seen.

I was sick with the memory of killings, of burning entrails, of grease oozing and smoking.

How does it come that prayer is surrounded with the smoke of slaughter,

And life with this rending of flesh?

And there, also, people had watched, and their eyes served only to make them blind.

Can it be that Israel, defeated, smothered, gagged,

Forever strikes down beasts, so as to accomplish, in spite of all, a bloody sacrifice.

Of which the Eternal has said, however, that it delighted him little.

The sacrifice which counts is that which we make of ourselves.

When we let flow the truth by stabbing the symbols in our heart.

CHAPTER VIII

DAYS AND WORKS

THE days, and the weeks, and the years.
The joy of living sets the measure of mornings and of evenings.

But they drop one by one into the past. We count them, if we wish, but the numbers are only the words of death.

That which was is immutable and fixed. God himself could not put asunder the two ends of the lightning which has flashed.

Each night is placed over all the days that were, and guards them. We are never more than a final day or a last universal night. We are only the mountain of our heritage.

Like those of whom the prophet has foretold that they will flee from desolation, and disperse themselves in the high places of Zion.

And the last day will come like a thief in the night.

JESUS

I apply myself to my work, and I make things for others.

Along the walls of the workshop stand fragrant boards, cut from the flesh of trees.

I love wood, with its hard skinless flesh, and I love to feel the difference between one wood and another.

Through the open door, I watch the passers-by. Each figure in turn disappears, as if swallowed up by the whiteness of the sky.

And I watch the old woman who crouches to spin her thread.

For her hands are two spiders.

And no light task is light of toil.

One must never be angry as he works, nor be impatient. For then the hand grows drunken, and happiness is fled. The good worker is he who has mastered calm. The wood and the tool must not quarrel, but must hold speech, one with the other. And when something has been made, one sees that it is good. And one is rewarded by the presence of something which is finished.

I have made tables and chests and beds, things which have a body, and carrying them to their

DAYS AND WORKS

owners, I have penetrated into houses, which are, each in its own manner, warmed by the breath of its occupants; and from threshold to threshold, I received the impression of the resemblance and the difference of us all.

I saw that all the people, while expecting the Revolution, are also expecting something for themselves, which is happiness. Thus, they possess two happinesses, one in the other, to be more sure.

But they imagine that happiness is a perfect object placed before them.

“When I have borne another child!” says one.

A child, compared with which all is old and coarse. A being to which its mother says, “You are very different from the others,” for this is the talent of mothers. But still she knows that motherhood ends badly: “Later,” she says, “he will no longer be my child, and I will still be his mother.”

“When I own this field,” says another. And all of them say, “I shall be happy at last.”

They hope to touch the idol which is happiness, and they are wasted away with hoping;

JESUS

they wait with sunken eyes, and meanwhile happiness is passing, passing.

Because happiness is not a thing made of one piece, as we believe, but a mixture of good and evil fortune.

Both of which are within us.

For, to hope is to have without having.

And to have is to hope no longer,

Because hope is the smile of misfortune.

Blessed are they that weep, for they shall be consoled.

Unhappy are they that are consoled, for they can weep no longer.

But the man who has been tempted wears a crown. Blessed are the unhappy who have greatly loved.

And once upon a time, in the heart of the blind, was the spirit of light.

* *

There was a very young woman of Magdala, who was called Mary, and we saw her sometimes here and sometimes there:

Her eyes like black mirrors in her dark face,

DAYS AND WORKS

her hair twined with leaves, her limbs of warm bronze, and all the weight of her person.

She was very shameless, and all the young men had their way with her, and all knew her breasts and her body, and her words smothered with kisses.

But when in my turn I presented myself before her, she ran far away.

There was another woman, and I do not remember her name.

But I remember that we felt a heavy shame.

For Adam and Eve are repeated in every man and woman.

And desire makes you mad for some one, and your voice chokes.

And the idol empties itself, and shatters into pieces.

I said, "What have we done!"

And the looks we cast on each other were full of hate, because it is the opposite of love.

She said, "We have trampled love beneath our feet."

My heart answered, "I did not love you. I

JESUS

only had need of you. And truly, did you love me, that you dare to speak in this fashion?"

She bowed her face in her hands.

And seeing that she was shameful of the face which was her spirit, and hid her face as Eve had hidden her body,

I said to her, "Why? What evil have we done?"

For now it was her suffering that tempted me, and made me tremble before her; and it is out of the ruins of our bodies, of our terrible pleasure, of selfish love, that is born the tenderness of pity, which is a double sweetness. Do you not see that with two, the love of the senses leaves them one and one, but pity makes them a single being?

For God shall be mingled with our sky, the sages have said, on the day when we shall stand naked and be without shame. Sensuality is ashamed of knowledge, but pity is ashamed of ignorance.

And I, I am ashamed of watching you with the eyes of dead love.

For you are you.

DAYS AND WORKS

So it was that we sought and were reunited, we who without moving had been on a far journey.

Now, we were sitting on a stone, and I could see the great tree which is the head of the village, and a star just above.

And behold! my pity struck deep as a knife, and I said, "The blood of your soul."

Between her fingers I saw her eyes, which were cast down.

Drawing aside her hands, which covered her face, I pressed my mouth against hers to touch her heart.

It was then she said, like Hagar to God, "You are the Living who have seen me."

Again she said, like Hagar in the wilderness: "He saw me, and have I not seen him also?"

Her lips, which were something naked on her naked face, moved to say, "You are goodness."

I am not goodness, but we are goodness together.

CHAPTER IX

MY FATHER DIED

ABOUT this time, my father died. When he lay down to die, he asked the reason. The men who stood round him, simple as mothers, answered, "For no reason."

There was a second when he was there, and then, a second afterwards, nothing was there. In that unbelievable moment, something of the void went into his breast; his eyes took on the fixity of lines, and his face the whiteness of white. You could see that the immobility of time had just now changed its place, and its beginning was in this bed.

How I wished that you were still the being which you are no longer!

* *

The day after the funeral, my mother said to me, "Already it is the morrow of the day when

MY FATHER DIED

he was sealed in the tomb, and when I became blind."

From her suffering came a sigh, a cry of great silence. And we felt a desperate passion for a man.

This man who was, to her and to me, the brother of our entrails.

For, imprisoned in the depths of us, were the joy and illumination of his life, and the festive resonance of his voice; and we marveled over the least of these things. And the face of the dead, the lips of the dead, were moving in our minds.

Him, the weak one, the shadow, I held to my breast. I watched over him. I had become the father of my father.

And though everything was blossoming in the gardens, where the fruits continued to ripen, everything was in mourning.

Because of me, the survivor.

It would be wrong to say that he was a corpse, for, except as he existed in me, my father was no longer anything. I myself was a corpse, and my mother was a corpse. Death is a man's with-

JESUS

drawing from himself and entering into you. There are no dead except those who exist in the living.

It is we who kill and who restore to life.

And, sounding the secrets of death, I said, "It is not he; it is I."

* *

In the evening, I went into the evil place of tombs, the corpse of the multitudes.

O desolation of desolations!

And, in the midst of the deeper twilight which veils this place of sepulchres, I saw two orphans, a boy and a girl, laughing because they were together. They were admiring the dark past of the world at their feet. Beneath them lay a multitude-thing which had changed its features under the earth and had no more eyes; yet the boy and the girl were in raptures because they held each other by the hand.

On account of their inner recompense.

They were both leaning against the same pale tomb, the outward skeleton of some person.

And that which brings misfortune to others,

MY FATHER DIED

was bringing happiness to them, since they were smiling.

These two frail shadows were creating their own solitude with the aid of the universe.

The great moment of my life was when, seated on a tomb—I could see the great tree which forms the head of the village and a little above it a star—I thought of love and death, and saw that they exist only within each heart.

And, as I looked into the twilight where a few shadows were moving, a ray of light appeared for me alone.

Truth, the religion which no one knows.

The direction of truth is other than we believe.

Truth does not come from God to us, but from us to God.

Such is the course of truth.

And the spirit comes from below.

We must no longer start from above. That which does not begin within ourselves, does not exist. We do not fall from heaven, but raise ourselves toward the skies.

CHAPTER X

PRISCILLA, OR, THE DESTINY OF EACH AND THE DESTINY OF ALL

EACH man overflows the bounds of his own being, and cannot exist alone.

At this moment of my destiny, one day when I was standing near a palm-tree that seemed all leaves and sunlight, I met Priscilla, whose face was an ecstasy of joy.

I chose her. Why? Of all men I am the one least able to tell. I love whom I love. Does everything come from me, even grace?

I love you. I make you lovely.

She was the name of my joy, and I believed that she loved me, for with her thinking lips, she told me so. But secretly she loved Jehiel, who professed to be my friend, and one day they ran away together to Bethsara.

She was gone, but she was here, she was there. Wherever I sought her, I found her presence in

PRISCILLA

myself, and that presence was the half part of her absence.

She was gone; and I could no longer leave her!

And I was furious and full of hate against the two that betrayed me: the disfigured double monster.

And I went into the mountains, and in spite of myself it was toward Bethsara that I went.

* *

Now, looking down one day from the edge of a cliff, I discovered the body of Priscilla and the body of Jehiel, clasped together.

They had fallen together on the stones, and had been killed. They were there, transfixed in death, and their feet were nailed to the very end of their earthly road, but they still had the strength to clasp each other in love.

Before falling asleep.

And it tore my heart to see Priscilla's form, now the image in ice of what the living flesh had been, but clinging endlessly to the other—although her half-open eyes were only two pearls.

JESUS

And in this embrace I saw their hatred of me laid bare.

Now, having climbed down to where they were, I found that they were still breathing, and that neither of them was dead.

And my throat sang, "She lives!"

For, to love a person is to feel that she must live. Even if, turning aside the face which holds all beauty, she must live for another.

And there was something within me that changed while I was dressing the wounds of these two that were but one.

I understood for all times the things of love, for now I had risen above them.

These things are no longer for me; these half-interior battles which are waged between men and women.

And neither is vengeance for me; nor indeed for any man. We can cause suffering or hatred; we cannot wreak vengeance. For I had thought to see Jehiel, my enemy, lying dead; but now I thought aloud, "Thou shalt not kill thyself."

And in a moment I had made my decision, and began to withdraw from her step by step.

PRISCILLA

And in a moment, I made up my mind, and I began to withdraw from her, step by step.

(Had I consulted only my own wishes, I should have stayed.)

* *

After having left them in peace, I returned home, and everywhere as I went through the fields, or passed the prison-like houses, I saw unfortunate folk who suffered.

Not all the people were suffering, but I saw only those in pain.

And they were not newly unfortunate, nor put expressly in my path; but before this I had not seen them so clearly.

But I had become myself.

Because my heart was torn by Priscilla.

And this was my real meeting with men.

The rich, the prosperous, the satisfied ones with clean clothing and fat lips, those who have the hands of others at the tips of their arms, and harvest the work of others,

Those who surround me, saying in unctuous voices, "We are just;"

Whom round about I regarded one by one, and

JESUS

to whom I said, "Which of you would not be ashamed to cast off the garments of his soul?"

And then, all the other men who walk under the sun,

Who cry out, but whose voice is not heard;

Who weep, but with fruitless tears.

And their sorrows have no more weight than those of little children who weep in their mothers' arms.

Or, they are like children of the streets who say, "We are singing and you are not."

A man tortured with weariness and cursed with toil, a man rooted in a field, whose shoulders rose and fell to change the face of the earth, said to me, "Once I was hungry for the earth, but now, the earth is my sorrow. For it is unjust.

"And the heavens are unjust in sowing the sunshine and the rain."

He was pure, he was just. And this pure and just man opened his mouth to say that which Cain said, "My pain is greater than I can bear." And, like Cain, he said, "But I have a mark upon me which forces me to live.

PRISCILLA

"For," said he, "I would I were in the graveyard, where the wicked no longer do evil;

"But what is mortal man, that the Eternal should chastize him every morning?

"Wilt thou not permit me, Lord God, to swallow my spittle? What wilt thou do with me, Preserver of men? And each day, at eventide, my arms are broken once more.

"Why is light given to man, whose way through life is stopped up!"

And another, alone by his hearthstone, says, "Weariness has struck me so that I have forgotten to eat my bread. And I am thirsty only for lamentations."

And another: "We wished to make eating and drinking the whole of life, but we were unable. One day we wished to make eating and drinking count for nothing, and we were unable. My dream has fallen from my head to my belly."

A poor creature said to me, "I have but a little flour." "Make two cakes with it," I said, "and give me one." "Yes," said she. "We shall eat them," she said, "then we shall die." And the

JESUS

poor woman was trembling all the time, because of the rain.

They work and they bend over. Every day, they bring something forth in travail. Every day, they are eaten up with hunger. The armies of the soil have no time to live, and are like the beasts of the field.

They retreat sadly from birth to death.

And, to these laborers, we might apply the very words which Eliphaz the Temanite has used in the Scriptures to describe the wicked man: "A dreadful sound is in his ears. He wandereth abroad for bread, saying, Where is it? And he dwelleth in desolate cities, and in houses which no man inhabiteth, which are ready to become heaps."

The misfortunes of the poor are caused by the magic wealth of others.

For we read that war is ordained, as it were, to the mortals of the earth.

Because the rules made by the rich for their success, and the example of the rich, bring about a war on the poor,

And even among the poor.

PRISCILLA

The power which falls from on high has another direction than truth, which rises from below; and all things are badly regulated on the earth.

For the humble are a giant, and the poor, being almost all men, are the wealth of the earth.

Because bread is their bread. Bread does not fall from heaven, but sprouts from the earth—by their toil.

So it was, for the first time, that I saw the punishment of the poor.

Whose two hands are always condemned.

It is good to see in one glance over the world that the poor are all alike.

Poverty in this respect is beautiful in its ugliness.

And those who were bent over knew that there was going to be a Revolution; that after the Revolution, everything would belong to everybody, and that there would be neither master nor slave; and their faces were waiting, while their hands worked and suffered.

I met a man whose children were dying for lack of all things, and he inquired of me, "Will the

JESUS

Revolution come before we die? In this lies all our hope."

It will come to keep the children from dying. That is all we can answer. Because it is not an idol, but the people themselves.

* *

So, having lifted myself above my own battles, I found the sunlight of pity, and it showed me at last the general scheme of things;

How they are ruled by the stars of cupidity and war.

And I saw that I had wasted much time away from the duty which I had set myself of doing something just.

For my time would soon be past, and it would be too late.

I had come by the road of personal desires. And I asked myself, "What road shall I take to return?" For I did not know which one to take.

For there are two roads and two destinies: That of each, and that of all.

And this is the destiny of each: To enjoy and to suffer, in heart and in body, by love and by death. And desire never possesses that on which

PRISCILLA

its heart is set, for its heart is set on that which it does not possess. Such is the brand which is endlessly seared into each man, and such is the original Fall of each man. On this road, all is vanity, to such an extent that there is no redemption for any individual, save in his own passion.

Because no living man is able to kill the suffering in himself. He can only die.

And this is the destiny of all: To suffer the evil deeds of those above them. To this destiny, one must learn not to submit. And this labor of disobedience is lasting. Your own destiny, O solitary soul, is one which ends with death. The destiny of all, is one in which death is nothing.

For the innumerable People, which possesses pain, also possesses immortality. Even when it is slain, the people can still cry out and rise.

And in this sequence of things, we cannot say that all is vanity. For, even though we are conquered by the first of the destinies I mentioned, we shall conquer the second if we stand united. The fool allows himself to be led by the desires of the flesh. His heart is on the left, but the heart of the wise man is on the right.

JESUS

The work we should do is the work which can be done.

And the Revolution will not come from heaven to earth, but will go from earth to heaven!

But those who are the first to open the way, and who wish to restore a natural life to the multitude, do not themselves lead a natural life.

They are accursed.

Of wanderers they inquire the way, and of beggars they ask alms.

And because they try at the same time to see things as they are, and to hope for things as they are not, they stumble.

And they themselves fail to do that which they say should be done.

They say, "It is not love which should be the cornerstone of the common law. It is justice which shall be that cornerstone. For love is from each to each, and not from each to all."

But they feel a tender love for all mankind, and though they dare not make of it an ordinance to rule the multitude, yet still they cherish it in their lonely hearts.

PRISCILLA

They place the destiny of others in their own destiny, something which is great almost to folly.

I have this great commandment in myself.

And I fill my conscience with the picture of all those whom I do not know, and I mingle in everything which is no affair of mine.

O men, I love you all, the eternally distracted.

I have seen my shadow rest on a bit of sunlit wall.

My rumpled hair, and the points of my chin and shoulder in a black zigzag on the stone.

I am only this: A poor laborer.

But a laborer who gives thought to the spirit of labor and of punishment.

I am a laborer for the laborers.

And here before my eyes are the city and the fields, seen with one glance, in the evening, at the time of day when the stars are still clothed in blue. Like the great Shepherd of our ancestors, I will carry the burden of all this people, and I will not say, "It is too heavy."

Because of those who are weak, we too are weak, and because of those who are hungry, we too are hungry.

JESUS

The voice of voices, the cry of cries.
I alone will follow this commandment.
I do not ask of them to follow it.
Of them I do not ask the impossible.

CHAPTER XI

NICODEMUS, OR, LIFE AND DEATH.

ONE night of high winds, I sat in a house in Jerusalem, where I was lodging.

Hilkiah crouched beside me on the ground, because he was paralyzed in one leg; and besides, he was a poor man who took up little space.

And a lamp that glowed on the table in the middle of the room was a spot torn from the darkness.

A man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus by name, a ruler of the Jews, came seeking me that night.

He came in the night, secretly, for he had courage enough to brave the darkness and the wind, but not enough to brave the opinion of men.

When the door had opened and closed, with a heavy gust of wind that puffed out his cloak, and when the flame of the lamp, disturbed by his entrance, had again become still, the first thing he said was, "Rabbi, Rabbi . . ."

JESUS

What should I answer?

"The hour has come," I said, "to enter into ourselves, and to discover that which is hidden there.

"For truth is within and not without.

"But that which is said in the shadows shall be heard in the light.

"But truly I tell you: Except a man be born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven."

Nicodemus answered, "How can a man be born when he is old? Must he enter a second time into his mother's womb?"

And Hiliah, dragging himself a little nearer, added, "Truly, how can a man be born again?"

I said, "The learned and the simple should know this truth, each having found it in the way of his life.

"It lies in separating the spirit from that which is not spirit,

"In accordance with the laws of justice and of the inner sight.

"For man, because of the silly freedom of ideas and words in the void, has superimposed many imaginary worlds on the real world. He

NICODEMUS

has mingled them one with the other, and is lost in their midst."

Nicodemus said, "But are there not, outside of ourselves, things which are true?"

"Yes, but there is nothing true, and nothing beautiful or grand, which is not confined within the great lines of justice,

"Which is within us.

"Isaiah has spoken of the spirit of the Eternal coming out of the rod of the stem of Jesse, and has said that it was the spirit of wisdom and intelligence, the spirit of counsel and action, the spirit of science and justice. For, if we try to examine the form of the spirit, we see that this form is drawn with great and terrible lines, which are the scaffolding of the universe, and which also portray the luminous contours of the human angel. It is necessary that justice reign in its frontiers, and that man render justice.

"And to this end we must separate those things which have reality from those which have only a semblance of reality.

"So that thought may be the miracle of the true.

JESUS

"Nicodemus though you are, your mind is full of images which disagree one with the other, because you have never reflected on the nature of these images, and because you have not made them over for yourself, or else you would have seen that they agree only on the surface, but are opposed in all else.

"And you accord an equal value to that which is apparent and that which is real; to that which is diabolic and that which is divine; to that which is dead and that which is living.

"And questions which rend the heart you resolve by closing your eyes, and you are content with closing your eyes, and you live gropingly through the present moment.

"And the word with you is the seed which grows a little while on stony ground, and dies. And you wait; you are of two minds; you waver. And when the mighty of the day speak of God, or Our Race, or Holy Law, you reply, So be it! And you are a poor liar.

"And you are legion."

And Nicodemus said, "What is it you say?" and the light which starred the table, and lit the

NICODEMUS

cheeks and the eyes of this Jew who debated with himself, gave him the wings of a black angel on the cavernous wall; and the noise of the wind, through the walls, breathed upon him.

Nicodemus: "We hear the passing of the wind."

Myself: "Yes, but we do not know whence it comes."

And I cried out and said, "When I say that the spirit is within us, I do not say that it is sealed within us, but I say that it begins within us.

"For, to free the spirit—which means, to understand the world in man and man in the world—we must rid ourselves of all idols.

"For these are death.

"And the spirit is eternal life.

"In telling them the truth, we make people come out of themselves, and be born in heaven, and speak in heaven and walk in heaven, and be that which they are.

"One must live."

He said, "The world is the world. One must live.

"Moreover, has not Ben Sirach said that wis-

JESUS

dom brings fear and anguish upon man," said Nicodemus, "and that it torments him by its discipline?"

I said, "The demon who tempts us has not the shape of a demon.

"But he is worse for not having that form.

"Here below the blind lead the blind, and they will fall together into the pit.

"It is because the little things, if seen very close, are greater than the great.

"But he who will have redeemed men's souls by snatching them from idols, shall be great in the Kingdom.

"You are plunged into confusion and darkness. He who does not see all at one time, is a drowned man. You do not see life, but the edges of life. You pass for a living man, but you are dead.

"The day has come when those who are in the tombs shall hear the word of heaven.

"He who hears me has passed from death into life."

Poor Hilkiah lifted one arm and said, "I bless you for what you say.

NICODEMUS

"Because you say that the bodies of those who were put into the tomb, as Bathsheba and Azariah and the child of Uri have lately been, will come to life again in an eternal paradise."

"No, I do not speak at all of the flesh.

"But I speak of life itself.

"When one sees the death of the flesh, one would like to say, It is almost nothing! But to deny death is to deny life, for it is like putting the living outside of life."

He said again, "Our life is only a gleam in immortality."

I said again, "Immortality is only a gleam in life."

"And yet," he said, "The light we see is weak, and there is much shadow around it."

"No, the shadow does not exist. That which you call shadow is the light which you do not see. It is not true that when night comes the world changes and takes a dark color. There is no shadow; there is only more or less of light. Nor is there silence; there is only space through which passes a voice.

JESUS

"And there is no unknown. There is only a little of the known.

"And there is no death. There are only ourselves.

"Be with me, open your inner eyes, and let the dead bury their dead."

Nicodemus said, "There are moments when I see all that I would see if I were risen from the dead."

He asked me, "You that show in a few words all the death of death, and that ask of us such a great beginning, who then are you?"

"I am the first-born of the dead.

"Because I have come to create the world within."

CHAPTER XII

TRUTH AND REALITY

As I was walking in the street, a young man drew near and questioned me:

“Master, I have heard spoken in divers fashions of these two things: truth and reality.”

I answered him, “We are always between these two; one is inside, the other outside. Look at the street in which we walk: It seems to contract in the distance, and its houses seem to diminish in size before our eyes, and yet, as we go along, we find it to be always of the same size, and its houses of the same height.

“And so, we have two images of the street: one which diminishes, and one which is always the same size.”

He said, quickly, “It is the one you mention last, namely that which is always the same size, which is the true one.”

“Yes, but the other is the only real one.

JESUS

"Do you not grasp the truth by the wrong end?

"The practical truth and the theoretical truth, the visible and the invisible, are not two different things, but the two faces of that which exists.

"Just as a circle has two different forms, according to whether we see it from the inside or the outside, although the circle remains the same."

His face growing brighter step by step as we went on, he pointed to an old woman who was drawing near, dressed in black to her very eyelids in the sun, as if she had taken her shadow from the ground and wrapped it about her. He said, "She is growing larger; yonder she was small; there, of middle size; close by, she is big. The whole truth lies in this."

And because we were walking, the houses were playing with their long and broad lines of gold.

And I said, Yes, and I said, "Every time that you have seen the two ends of truth in disagreement, you were being deceived.

"For they are inseparable.

"Seek out the splendor of light and the justice

TRUTH AND REALITY

of lines, and all the rest will come of itself. The rest: that is, the smile of certitude.

"The miracle is, that by closing your eyes, you make a world. But it would be still finer if this were the real world.

"So, do not amuse yourself by separating the true from the real, the spirit from life.

"Because, in all places, there is but one reality and one truth: the same, which is not the same.

"Because there is never a little idea without a little thing.

"And because there is never a great idea without a great thing.

"For, if you separate reality from truth, reality becomes blind, and truth becomes mad.

"But we are frightened of that which the inside of our heads can create in the void.

"The evil is that we can say whatever we wish. And even, that we can take what has already been said and make it mean whatever we wish.

"Satan can say, if he so please, 'Nothing but the good is worthy of being adored.' And this is a lie, for it comes from the mouth of Satan.

JESUS

"Is not the hypocrite one who utters beautiful thoughts?

"The words of fools are taken from the general multitude of words, say the Scriptures,

"Because words let us do with them as we will.

"But truth, meanwhile, is mute."

Didymus said, "One must touch it."

I answered, "You speak rightly.

"I wish to be the spirit in flesh and bone.

"So that I may be touched by the hand of joy.

"For the flesh and the spirit are the two parts of a single thing:

"Life."

* *

Afterwards, in a corner, we met a crazy woman, who was dirty and poor, and her dress fell about her like the rain.

She said, "I am happy, for surely I am the Queen of Sheba."

Around me, moved by compassion, they were saying, "We must leave her as she is."

No, we must never respect madness.

Let intelligence be pure as the day.

TRUTH AND REALITY

And let thoughts proceed from the mind in straight lines.

And then, farther on, we met a man who was working; and it was the sabbath day!

At which I said to this man who was working at the time when one must not work according to the Law, for he was loading his ass: "Man, if you know what you do, you are blessed. But if you do not know, you are accursed and a transgressor of the Law."

First one must understand.

To believe without knowing, is a jaw without a body.

CHAPTER XIII

RISE UP AND WALK!

HILKIAH came creeping toward me, using his hands to walk.

His leg was sound, but foolish and lifeless. Thus, if he only willed it, he could walk.

One day I told him in a loud voice, while the crowd suddenly grew still, "The hour has come for you to be cured.

"Rise up and walk!"

And they saw him stagger to his feet and take steps,

While his face glowed with terror and joy, like a child's.

Those who witnessed this wonderful change were ready to cast themselves down before the new man, so sweet and so dreadful was this thing, and they spoke to me with great praise, saying, "You are a true prophet, for you perform miracles.

RISE UP AND WALK!

“So, we believe in you.”

But they did not know the power which each one has in himself, and the inner wealth of faith; and that to cry out, “I believe!” is a weapon.

Poor Hilkiah knew even less than the others that he was the cause of his cure.

He believed that a divine breath had passed into him, though it had come only from within himself.

For he did not know the direction of the truth.

There was something in them all which refused to acknowledge this.

Friends, you must first of all have confidence. This means that you must depend upon yourselves. All that you pray for, if you have faith, will be accomplished. It is faith which saves.

If you have faith, and if you said to this mountain, Go ye hence, and be cast into the sea, it would cast itself down—if you had faith. Grant your own prayers.

And I was surrounded on that day by a multitude of people.

In whom were all the miracles of the world.

CHAPTER XIV

MAN AND THE WIND

AND already in those times I began speaking to a few who gathered about me.

To preach the gospel of the spirit.

And it was on the shores of the sea of Tiberias.

And one morning I embarked with a few companions, who were fishermen.

Because they cast their nets for fish, those little helpless monsters clad in armor.

They uprooted them from the sea, and every fish is finally reduced to a cold line, with wide open eyes, something that we hold in our hands.

On the morning when I embarked, the sun was shining. And rooted to the shore, women and children waved to us graciously, like a garden moving in the breeze, when the trees, though frozen to the earth, go fleeing before the wind.

But, when we were far from the shore, the wind sprang up and darkened, and we were thrust

MAN AND THE WIND

into the tempest and the crumbling mountain of darkness.

And we were like grains of sesame in the midst of a measureless chaos.

For the whole sea was twined on itself.

It was drunk.

And the sky was the sea.

And the wind rolled the sea till it became a river. The horizon was torn to shreds, and we could see watery monsters passing, and little barks that fled before the black whips of the waves.

And our boat was flooded by a great sea, and my companions were already like shipwrecked men.

I was calm and raised my arms, standing at the prow of the boat where the water came in, heavy as earth, making us swallow the smell of the abyss and the abyss itself.

And I cried to these few cramped and dripping men, speaking as loudly, because of the noise of the wind, as if I were talking in a public square:

“Why do you doubt, O men of little faith!”

JESUS

Then these bodies with a single voice cried out, "We do not want to die!"

And the weight of the waves was conquered by the invisible greatness of man.

Because I had given them their own courage and their own strength, they thought that I was a magician of God.

And I judged that it was best to let them believe this for yet a little while.

Because they were not capable of thinking and constructing according to the laws of nakedness.

And I was bitter because I was forbidden to pour out my heart into their hearts; that is, to give them all that by right was theirs.

You must, if you are right, inspire confidence. If you do not inspire it, take it.

But when will they see my heart?

When will they say of me, pointing me out with their fingers, "Behold, a man!"

CHAPTER XV

THE CROWN OF THORNS

A BENCH, as you remember, ran along the wall, and was surmounted by a crown of thorns.

In those days there was an evening when I returned like a tired traveler, and lying down in the shadow, I saw that the stone bench was breathing.

For John Zacharias was seated there, as if, by a miracle, he had not moved since I parted from him, as you remember, many years before.

I sat in my place beside him. Two men, side by side in the shadow, form a single shadow, separated in the middle by death.

But night removes, as I had seen in my early days, the mask of the face from the face, and even the mask of the breast from the heart.

And we spoke in low tones, as if the night were a child.

And in the night we did not see the crown of

JESUS

thorns, but knowing that it was there, we believed in it.

"You see, I have come back.

"Now I know how joyful is the deed, and that this joy is suffering and war.

"And that peace will not be made with peace."

"Did you not know it?" he said.

"Now, I know it.

"And furthermore I know that I knew it in those days."

Then, having said what we had said, there was nothing but a silence which resembled us.

So, to me who did not move, he said:

"Where are you going, Lord?"

Having lowered my head beneath the terrible suspended crown, I answered with all my shadow:

"They shall not see my heart till I have torn it from myself.

"Perhaps, some day."

CHAPTER XVI

YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, TO-MORROW

ARE you the Messiah?" a woman asked.
"No, I am not he."

The woman sighed and was sorry for what I had said.

At last, raising her head, she asked, "Then, tell me where he is."

"He is in the future.

"The Messiah opens the body of future.

"And gives it a heart.

"And measures it like a milestone that moves forward.

"To believe in his coming is to assume our true form, which flows like a torrent and has no end."

John Zebedee was among us. He opened his mouth and said, "When finally it is announced that the Messiah had come, will not the great soul of Israel cease to make progress on that day?"

JESUS

"And the book of Zion be closed?"

And John turned aside, not daring to add a word to what he had spoken.

I continued, "The Messiah is not as you think."

"Master," said John, "Repeat what you have said. For as yet we do not see it clearly."

I answered, "The Messiah is the spirit, and the spirit is within us.

"The kingdom of God is like a little seed which will grow into a tree. Hence, the tree was in the seed, as the truth of the world is in ourselves. Or the Kingdom can be likened to a treasure which is found by a man in a field, at his feet, and which, once in his hands, shines forth. We are never strangers in the kingdom of truth, but we do not always see it. The kingliness of seeing is within us. The reign of God will not come with a sudden splendor, and no one will exclaim, Behold! it is here, or, Behold! it is there; for truly, the reign of God is in your midst. Is this not clear as the day?"

But John answered, "You have said that the Kingdom was in the future, and how can you tell us that it lies in our midst?"

YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, TO-MORROW

"It is because you, the bearer of God, are at the same time the present and the future, so long as you are living. For a man, from moment to moment, is divided into two men, one of whom falls forward and the other back. If you say, Yesterday, you are speaking of death; if you say, Tomorrow, you are speaking of life. To say of a Messiah, He is there, is the same as saying, He was there.

"For we must expect him, in order to trust in his aid.

"The present is the beginning.

"Those who have ears, let them hear, and understand to the depths of their hearts.

"The great things are not of the past.

"And they are not of the present, but they will always be.

"Enough of the world of the past. Behold! a new miracle will come to pass.

"Where are we going? The answer is, we go.

"Death alone has a form. Life is formless. But how can we build on the future, and put our trust in things which do not exist?"

Meanwhile we saw a sower going into his field

JESUS

to sow. At which I said, "This man is carrying seeds. He is building on the future, and putting his trust in the mighty harvest which does not exist."

John Zebedee said, "Is the truth, then, no longer hidden from view?"

He was standing with his arms crossed on his breast. I could see his forehead wrinkle, and bend down toward his folded arms. He was thinking in front of himself and within himself, like a mother. He was watching the first trembling steps of the truth.

And he cried out like a man on his sickbed who cries to frighten pain: "If you give life to the spirit, you make of it an angel of destruction!"

And he was afraid and made a sign of doubt.

But, at the moment of doubt, his eyes were opened.

The eyes of your face, John, which bring the future close.

Here are the gates of the heavens.

The revolt.

CHAPTER XVII

MARTHA AND MARY

THE one is always on her feet, moving, working, carrying a vessel, and constantly drawing near.

The other is seated, motionless, sometimes looking into space as into a mirror, sometimes looking at me, and always, though motionless, drawing near.

The first is Martha and the second Mary, the two women who surround me with their care.

Martha. The housewife, the servant, the weaver of minutes.

Often she said, "I work so that he who is precious to me, need have no other task than being precious." And I obeyed her obedience.

She said, "If you choose the ill road, I will choose it also, for your road only is good in my eyes."

Mary Magdalene. She did nothing.

JESUS

Except to be there.

And yet, one day, she poured a vessel of perfume over me, and wiped my feet with her hair. Then she returned to her posture of doing nothing all her life. This was her service. And I obeyed her obedience.

A flower was on the table, dying in a vase.

She said, remembering the bright promise of an evening in the past, "It is like a word of love, after the word is spoken."

* *

Both of them breaking their heart for me, like bread.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY

JUDAS ISCARIOT came out of a corner and pulled at the edge of my cloak as I passed. "May I speak with you, Lord?"

And he looked at me sideways, saying, "Lord, I have something against you.

"It is the matter of that vessel of oil which the woman emptied over your head to amuse herself.

"Now, the common purse is in my keeping. This oil was our whole supply. At the very least it was worth three hundred pence.

"A whole vessel of ointment, at a single stroke; think of it! And the looks of the thing! The woman is crazy. And moreover, is it fitting to wipe the feet of a Rabbi with her hair? And one would have said, Lord, that you were well pleased."

JESUS

And he grumbled like a dog that rises to its feet.

Judas Iscariot is a poor man who means well, but he is a small soul.

There are no worse enemies than those poor little folk who are anxious that people should say of them, "Such a one is no fool."

When I meet Judas, it is like running into a tree.

* *

In the days of which I speak, a crowd drew near me. They pushed before them a shapeless thing which was a woman, hiding her face, bundled up in her own terror.

She had been taken in the sin of adultery. "Should she, or should she not, be stoned according to the law. O Rabbi, speak!"

They said this to embarrass me, while the woman was trembling at the hand of death on her living flesh, and the cries of the mob were stoning her already.

"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

The scribes did not know what to answer nor

THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY

what to do, and dispersed with their great hands of stone.

We must be stern of principle in order to build the temple of justice, for every workman is stern, but in life we must be very careful to restrain our hands.

For acknowledge, all my hearers, that justice is not intended to rest heavily on each man, but to rest as lightly as possible. It must not rage, but those who so wish may rage against it.

For calmness will always win the day.

Blessed are the easygoing, for they shall inherit the earth. Mercy is the sister of justice; both are of one spirit, and both open their eyes before opening their hearts.

And justice, as it grows in wisdom, grows kinder and more yielding.

* *

While the crowd was retiring, disappointed of its spectacle, and while a few were dragging behind, ugly with having swallowed their stones, I said to the woman, "My daughter, go, and sin no more."

JESUS

She descended toward the town, and was lost in the distance.

Her dress, I remember, was green.

Far away, yet at my feet, was the image of the city, ending in dust.

I was sitting on the rim of the cistern, and with a little stick, in the powder which carries all day the shadow of our acts, I began writing words, as I had been doing before the crowd drew near.

Then, looking over my shoulder and leaning backwards, while the still water of the cistern breathed its freshness on me, I saw my reflection on the dark surface.

My cloak of gray cloth on my thin shoulders, my disheveled hair, my pallid face.

That face made ugly with the misery of all men.

And my eyelids a little reddened, like the eyelids of those who have been consoled.

And my eyes a little haggard.

Because of all that had yet to be done.

And I thought, What have I done so far?

THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY

And I thought, How many others, who now
are drowned, have longed for the same thing?

And doubtless, a hundred years ago, and a
thousand years ago, in this corner, some man now
lost as I shall be lost, resembled me. In his heart,
which once beat, he tried to be the man of all men.
And like mine, his arms fell back, discouraged
with working for the world, weary with trying to
create hope from despair.

CHAPTER XIX

THE TOWER OF MEN

JOH^N, son of Zacharias, was in the country, and preached to the multitudes.

And often where I passed, he had passed before me, or was about to pass.

There, in the midst of the colorless plain and the evil stones which paved it to the horizon, there, between the deep green blotches of two curly-headed trees, were the violent blue and yellow blotches of his garments, and his red face with its black features, and one of his black hands with a finger pointing into the air, and his long left arm still further prolonged by a staff.

He was skinny and furious as a man of the wilds. His cheeks were hollow and his belly hollow, and the muscles of his flesh were hard, for he lived on grasshoppers, and he spoke the vulgar tongue, and he hurled his cries on the

THE TOWER OF MEN

heads of those who came to hear him, like a man breaking stones.

For he was a good workman, and his task was destruction. Idols he cast down and shattered, even to the core of light which all of them contain. For they borrow some dignity from their makers, and even the golden Calf has a little blood.

He said, and his lips moved enormously, and his eyes rolled wildly in the hollows of his face, and his mouth became a square:

"You are like the ostrich, the camel-bird. And no one ever, in any corner of the world, was besotted as you are.

"And, as David wished, may your table become a snare and that which should have been for your welfare become a trap, and may you fall therein, as a retribution upon you.

"Beware!"

All his body was tensed in the effort to cry out.

He roared, he filled his words. He put his own blood into them. He forged a crowd of his own within the crowd. He drove confusion from their midst, and it gave way like a herd of cattle.

JESUS

Each of his words laid something bare, split something open, and at those moments a drop of clarity would be enough to make the whole man overflow.

Then he washed them with water, to make them understand that the soul must also be washed.

* *

One day he came to the place where I was, and I heard him speak with Judas Iscariot, berating him for his narrowness and caution.

Judas answered him, "Master, what have you against me?"

"He answered, "Nothing, because you are nothing.

"You do your little task, but you are neither cold nor hot. Would God that you were cold or hot. But because you are lukewarm, I will spit you from my mouth."

Then John the Baptist saw me as I drew near to him, and said, "The one who comes after me is mightier than I, and I am not worthy to unloose the latchet of his shoe.

THE TOWER OF MEN

“He comes, in his full stature. And he is pale as the east.”

* *

But the day came when we saw no more of John Zacharias.

Because he had been taken to prison.

Like all those who do as they think.

One day a band of soldiers, children of the poor Roman people, seized and bound this man who wished to set his brothers free.

And the spectacle around him was crying,

As if he himself were still crying out.

And I, with some others, left the roads, turning my face toward the desert,

To visit the place where he sometimes stayed when he was beyond Jordan.

After a march of three days through the desert without a track, we saw his little hut with its door swinging open.

The prostrate threshold, the upright wall, and stones, stones all about.

All was desolation, as far as the eye could reach, as far as the river, and his silence brooded over all.

JESUS

And from being united there, his disciples were all dispersed.

Because John had disappeared.

Inside the hut, a mass of earth or mud formed a sort of a table, and on this table signs were written.

They were bits of him,

Which his finger had found and placed there.

And we read these writings, hanging on his words in the gulf of his absence, while the others waited till we had read to the end:

“You are like the ostrich, the daughter of cries.”

And the writing of the finger of John said further:

“And Balaam, son of Beor, has said, and the man whose eyes are open, has said:

“As if they were soothsayers, you listen to the deaf preacher, to the wind of words, and to old men, who have only bones within their skulls, and whose eyes are of glazed frost.

“But here is a deed. A thing. What is it? The greatest of all.”

And these words I repeat are the testament

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which the man who was no longer there had written with his finger on the belly of the mud. This also was written, foretelling his glory:

“And the man has said, and the man whose eyes are open, has said:

“What was the greatest thing? I slept; but during my sleep I was wrapped in such darkness that I was afraid.

“And then, a murky daylight, and a firebrand which passed across the greatest thing,

“Which was the tower they had wished to raise to the sky.

“And God said then, according to the Scriptures, If the people is one, and they have all one language, and if, moreover, they work, then God is lost.

“Therefore, let us confound their work and destroy the unity of the people, and to this end let us, the Gods, divide their one speech into many.

“And for this let us make use of their own mouths, and of their heads which are shells of light.

“This he did, and they no longer understood

JESUS

one other, speaking in various tongues and warring one against the other.

“And even those who spoke the same tongue, never afterwards understood one another.

“For, when the work of men is great, it is not the fire of Heaven which can destroy it.

“But men themselves.

“It is man who makes, or who does not make, or who unmakes.

“And the tower ceased to grow and crumbled slowly toward the plains.

“And the nations were cursed by the nations.

“And at the end, they cried, Lord, who then art thou?

“I am He who hath said, in the first days, that which was written in the Scriptures, If man eat of the fruit of knowledge, he will be like unto us, the Gods, and that must not be.

“Because he would move the mountains.

“Because he would own the lightning of the sun.

“I am the divine Enemy.”

* *

THE TOWER OF MEN

John Zebedee was with me,
To whom I said, "You hear. . . ."
Who answered me, "I see."

CHAPTER XX

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

I WENT up into a mountain, followed by a few of the faithful.

We stopped and turned about, and there was a great multitude following after me.

And seeing this throng attracted by my presence, I wished to address them, for the hour had come to fulfil my duty by opening my heart to them.

So that my belief should resound over the earth.

And my simplicity be made manifest.

But, for a second, I did not know how to begin.

Because of the greatness of the beginning.

Some children were standing side by side, a few wearing bonnets, the others bare-headed, and all with garments so torn as to look like em-

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

broidery, with pairs of little feet showing beneath.

And they wished to come closer, but the others scolded them in whispers, saying, "Go away."

There were especially, in the first row, Pharisees, scribes and doctors.

One of them said in a loud voice, so that all might hear him, "How can this man speak of the Scriptures, never having learned them?"

But my shrill voice caught hold of the scoffer: "How can you speak of the truth, never having learned it?"

A scribe called out to me, pointing at me with his finger:

"You have cured a palsied man on the sabbath day!"

"Hypocrites, should I have left him imprisoned one day more? The sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath.

"But you are of those who say, Do that which I say and not that which I do. For you say much and do little.

"For only your gestures and the tips of your tongues are pious. You give alms to the sound

JESUS

of trumpets, and call our attention with great shouting, and you pray standing in the corners of the streets that you may be seen, and, for fear of resting your eyes upon a woman, you bow your heads so low that you run them against a wall. And well you know how to hold your peace, O spewers forth of great words."

And the people sent up a great cry of joy, like a big brother to a little brother.

Because they were glad of the truth.

And their great silence opened toward me.

At this moment, I had two thousand hearts, like the crowd.

My word was my flesh and my blood.

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

"Do not unto others as you would not have them do unto you.

"This is the beacon in the tempest of life.

"For every man is like every other man.

"But this teaching will carry you far, for therein lies the whole sum of earthly justice.

"To the very end.

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

“And the works of nature are great but formless.

“But the monuments of man have the symmetry of justice.

“And this, under heaven, shall be the monument of time,

“Which all workers shall raise together.

“And take into yourselves all these truths which have been drying and wasting away for lack of blood.

“For the letter is outside of you, but the spirit is within you.

“Day and night remake yourselves according to the laws of the spirit.

“And believe in yourselves.

“You are caught in practices, observances, and rules, as if in nets.

“And also in dead maxims.

“Despair of appearances, and say, No.

“For you embody justice.”

* *

“Drive out these doctors and scribes, for they are ignorant creatures, knowing only one thing,

JESUS

which they call the Law, but which is only their law.

“And who, says the prophet, are following the wrong road, with their ideas borne before them like a banner.

“Blessed are the simple in spirit, for to them more doors are opened than to us.

“Suffer these little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who resemble them.

“And it would be good to put ourselves on their level.

“Heaven is not an object to be won by stretching your arms into the air.

“Have heaven in yourselves.

“And do that which is in yourselves.

“And then, builders of the real, your own arms will lift you.

“You, the simple, the poor, the multitude.

“You, the palsied people.

“Put yourselves at the beginning of things.

“Start over again.

“The Jewish people is a little people and a great soul.

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

"Of which I am the guardian.

"And the prophet.

"To save those who are lost."

* *

That day, they drew near to me. The children cried, Hosanna, and the multitude took me in its arms.

And I told them to meet me in the Temple, two days before the Passover.

And John Zebedee said to me, "I saw your soul shining through your face, and there was a sword which darted from your mouth."

* *

Then, at the time of the evening prayer, there were three of us alone on the road which led onwards.

I, and Simon bar Judah, and Paul, my disciples. For they were going onwards, as the road led them.

For, Simon had told me, "I have heard you. I have understood you. Your speech has penetrated into me. It has entered by one extremity of my heart. It shall go out by the other. I am leaving now to make it known to men."

JESUS

And Paul had said the same: "I have understood. Your light is so greatly within me that even in the night, I see it; and I too shall be the cry of your voice, carried in my body."

And there was something which made one man of us three.

So both of them left me to go and preach my word. I went with them for a little way along the road (and above, a few stars marched before us); then, at the first crossroads, they left me and left each other, one taking the south road, and one the north.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MARRIAGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

I HEARD the discourse of Mishael, who had joined us of late:

“How shall we answer when they ask, If God created all things, did he also create evil?”

John Zebedee answered immediately, with the manner of one who had already reflected on the matter: “This cannot be answered, and you must speak of other things.”

Didymus, whose heart was heavy with this question, and who was always dissatisfied (I loved him for this), interrupted with rage in his voice:

“Why does the good man lead a life that is full of sorrow? He weeps and there is no judgment. He prays like some one talking to himself. Then he loses his strength and passes away; he is laid in the ground, and what is there left of him?”

JESUS

“And why, as Job once asked, do the wicked live and grow old in wickedness and prosperity? And why was Job, the one who asked this question, bereaved, despoiled of his goods, and rotted alive; and why did he say to the grave, Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister—to the sole end that God and Satan might make a game and a trial of him?

“For suffering,” said Didymus, “cannot be wiped out; and by what right are the innocent, even for the instant of an instant, treated as criminals? If there were but one drop of blood left on the earth, would it have to be spilled? Is not this drop of blood worth as much as all the goodness in the world? And since suffering is vain, why has God put it into the flesh and bones of man?”

And Didymus cried out in a loud voice, as was his wont, “Trials are abominations.”

Going further into the depths of himself, he shouted, “If he were the creator of evil only! But why has he condemned to death?

“Yahweh, O thou untiring maker of corpses!”

THE MARRIAGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

But he was silent, hearing the murmurs of the others, who were whispering against him.

Nathanael said, "We can say nothing because of our ignorance, and whoever dares to speak (of God, and of God's marriage with suffering) will be as if swallowed up.

"For man is nothing, and should he try to justify or explain himself, he would be trifling with the God of the established order, and vaunting himself as equal to him of whom Job, the giant of the Scriptures, has said, Even if he were to answer me, I would not believe that he had heard me."

I said, "When we say that God created all things, we are obliged to contradict ourselves, and add that others than he created evil. Others: the others that exist: we others. And evil, we say, is the explanation of suffering and death.

"But this is explaining the night by the darkness."

This affirmation troubled those who were there. I saw that they were thinking with terror of these idolatrous doctrines based at the same time, equally, on white and on black.

JESUS

One of them said, "These things should not be spoken." And I saw some of them who, within themselves, withdrew from me.

For they saw a void opening in space.

But I said, "It is the crying proof that all is within us.

"Within us we have the gulf of pain, and the source of truth, and the sources of error. And we hold also the power of disobeying, and the power of obeying. So, let us speak the truth."

And they saw the place of beginning change from heaven to earth, from God to man.

They lowered their heads and looked at me no longer, fearing to see the truth.

And these men were shaken like mountains.

All that I say, is written within me.

And in them. I will say everything that is written in me, and in the bowels of the multitude. And I will cry it from the house-tops.

We must speak. We must say that which is, even if many tongues have spoken otherwise.

Even if all have spoken otherwise.

If I am silent, I die But once having spoken, I can die and yet speak on.

THE MARRIAGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

In the evening while I sat alone to meditate, I heard a voice which I had often heard by day, the familiar voice of a head inclined toward mine, and saying:

"Jesus, you say only simple things, but they are too simple. For this reason your presence is fearful, and when one lives beside you, one is overwhelmed.

"Because you are the master of eyes.

"O plenitude of all I see!"

And another was sad because he had forgotten. "I cannot remember, I cannot remember. Even sorrow has deserted me, and has left me alone, as the dead are alone. The things of twenty years past, the woman and child who clung to my breast, I have forgotten like the depths of the ages. And I hardly remember, alas! that I was once unhappy."

And his sorrow sought my hand, to be enriched.

But Lazarus, who was never able to suffer in times past, said to me one evening, "I was dead, and you have resurrected me."

CHAPTER XXII

GOD OF MY JUSTICE

I PASSED near a town called Shechem, where lies the well of Jacob, and meeting a woman near this well, I asked for a drink.

She answered, "Do you know who I am, that you ask me for a drink? I am a Samaritan. And we believe that God dwells on this very mountain, while you, the Jews, say that he dwells in Jerusalem."

"Woman, the day has come when God shall be worshiped neither in Jerusalem nor on the mountain, but in spirit and in truth."

She said, "Where is he?"

"He is not in the sanctuaries made by the hands of men.

"You seek for his image to say, It is there, and you wish to give him an outward form

"And yet it is written, Thou shalt not make any images.

GOD OF MY JUSTICE

“And no one has the right to utter the Name, which yet has been known since the days of Moses, so that there may not be even the beginning of an image. God is in secret.”

This woman, being a woman, said to me, “I pray you, tell me your name.”

I answered, “Why do you ask?”

She said, “Then bless me.”

* *

When she had departed in astonishment, to some degree enlightened and increased in stature, along the very road which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had trampled with their gigantic steps and their great flocks,

I began to meditate, and delivered myself over to the commandment which delivers us.

In spirit and in truth. Thou shalt make no images.

And I followed this commandment wherever it led.

For, when I say that God is somewhere outside of us, I make an image.

I make of the sky a thing, and of thunder a person.

JESUS

And this is gross and sensual.

God is within us. Hence, he is nowhere else.

And they say that almighty God walks on the tower of the skies, and that the sun comes from his bowels, and they make him the greatest of all the Orientals.

And in this manner they commit the crime for which the Scriptures have cursed them, of bowing down before the work of their hands.

The embodied justice proclaimed by Elkaniah consists of a body, which belongs to the earth, and of justice, which is interior.

For we carry within us the roots of the tree of symmetry.

And was it not said by David, "O God of my justice!"

We have need of him, of the infinite Stranger, and this need is God.

We bow down in fear before him, and this fear is God.

We fashion idols of wood and metal.

And also of words, which are images in signs, and of ideas, which are images in light.

And also of the cry of our hearts.

GOD OF MY JUSTICE

And we say, "This cry is some one that exists outside of ourselves."

But it is only a prayer.

Long ago, when our forefathers had as yet only a little light, they worshiped in the Tabernacle two stones which were God.

So do we also, except that the two black stones have become as large as the world.

The God-World, the idol of idols.

Sacrilege of my glances, carnage of my heart.

From the very depths of my anguish, I cried,
No!

All is within us, and our cry does not go beyond us, and our outstretched arm does not go beyond us, and we do not go beyond ourselves, even when maddened with dreams and furious with despair.

Then, is God only within us?

Yes, God exists only in ourselves.

He exists within us, like the dead whom we loved, and to whom we give life. It is a mixture in which there is only ourself. God is in secret. In spirit, if you prefer. God exists substantially

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in spirit. God rises from the depths to the heights.

It would be better if he were outside of us, if the rain had a father, and if justice were the Angel of Justice, and if some one commanded the fire to burn and the sea to be salt. For, if he were there, the dying would seem to die, and the mourner would feel his solitude redouble, and destiny would be a great balance, and we should all be at peace.

But he is not there.

And to say that God exists throughout the world of appearances, is as foolish as to say that it is our duty to be happy.

And to believe because it is profitable to believe is to prostitute the soul. It is giving yourself for money.

Thou shalt remake thy heart from day to day.

Thou shalt repeat from day to day the creation of the spirit.

Without blemish.

And thou shalt not surrender thyself to an image placed before thee,

GOD OF MY JUSTICE

Which comes from thyself, even though it unite the Orient to the Occident.

* *

I returned to the midst of these creators of God.

They said of the blue heavens, "I can feel them touching me."

They said, "Glory to God. Everything comes to us from God."

As for me, I thought, "Everything goes from us to God, even God himself."

Another said to me, "I was an idolator, but I no longer worship idols since the day when you cried that the great Pan was dead."

He did not know the depths from which that cry had come.

Another cried in a frenzy, "God!"

And a child who was near me said, when he saw this man weeping on the ground and shaking like a bush in the wind, "He cries out as if what he says were not true."

And thus, I perceived the Restitution.

Humanity, poverty, glory, and salvation!

JESUS

For, to this imagined God, everything imaginable was attached.

They made him say whatever they wished. They made their sins and errors come from him to us.

And all their politics as well.

And they have woven words in the air of time, and they are tied by them, and they stumble against the nightmares which they have scattered about.

The rule of justice was born from mangled flesh and mangled dreams. But they have twined it into dazzling Name.

For their own use.

And they have grown smaller.

And men—the poor men to whom it is said, Die at your task. Kill or be killed—are driven back by this phantom when they try to people their fine dream.

For, if they try to move, they are overwhelmed. They are crushed by the greatness of the world: by the weight of the mountains in white armor, by the hollow weight of the sea, and of light, and by the whirlpool of the winds, the rains, the riv-

GOD OF MY JUSTICE

ers, and by the great round invasion of life. All nature hurls itself upon them in the form of God. The unknown, moreover, makes itself known in order to defeat them. And they no longer dare even to say that they are just. In the desolation of perdition, they dare to say nothing. They cover their mouths with their hands. When they speak, they tear their own flesh with their teeth; and so it has been since the sky has held its dominion over us.

Beings are annihilated by the non-being. And men are forced to proclaim a faith which is anti-human.

But, step by step as I grew, I saw growing in my heart the beginning of all things.

And I saw the wealth of our solitude heaped up—

We, the kings of God.

We, who are the place where earth and heaven meet.

We, the world of worlds.

Our supplication has the weight of living waters.

It is the whole stature of a deaf God.

JESUS

Rooted within us.

And the hope of man is God's own flesh.

These are the good tidings of God.

Because a great hope will come like a lever to
move all things.

Already I can see its coming.

For men will emerge from the original sin of
obedience. I see them coming out on all sides.

And redeeming themselves at last, by their
thirst for understanding.

And behold, they win back, by force, the fruit
of the knowledge of good and evil, which makes
them divine.

And from which they have been driven away
by the swords of a nightmare.

And by the voice which said, "I am the pro-
prietor of Heaven!"

And they will not only approach the tree of
the knowledge of good and evil,

But also the tree of life, which it is written
that the Lord hath well guarded.

For, so he said, the life of men would be the
death of the Gods.

GOD OF MY JUSTICE

Then, rise up, O divine corpse, God of my own being!

We believed you living, but you were dead.

And so it is that I call upon the great corpse of the God-world, and that I raise it up with all my power.

And that I make it change place.

And I, who am like you in all things, hunted, rejected, mortal—I bring you that which is most divine.

The purity of the kingdom of the spirit.

The spirit is the immaculate conception.

I am he that I am.

I am his Voice and his Spirit.

And I am a false God.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DOOR TO THE KINGDOM

MEETING with John Zebedee, I asked, "Did you come to seek me?"

He answered, "I was seeking my own self."

He meditated, bowing his head in deep anxiety, resting his two hands before him on his long staff. And he opened his heart to me, saying, "Whence does this spirit come?"

"It is a great voice which comes to us in dreams, but whence does it come?"

He answered his question with another, "Does belief then mean to believe before believing?"

But he repeated, "Whence does the spirit come?"

"John, listen to the breathing wind. It reigns, but no man knows from whence it comes.

"The spirit of which you speak is the miracle of ourselves; spirit and life are the same miracle, and this miracle consists in our power to grasp

THE DOOR TO THE KINGDOM

the truth, and to make the form of our ideas fit squarely with the form of things, and also, with the art of justice, to plan the community of men, and to love only by dint of understanding. To live is to create the truth.

“John, the spirit of which you speak is within us. Let your question be only, Whither does it go?”

He repeated, “Whence does it come?”

And he waited. He was waiting for me to say that it came from the God of our fathers.

And having waited (he wore a dark mantle that day), he said, “Answer me, if you have anything to say. Is there nothing more?”

And my heart cried proudly, “No!”

* *

Afterwards, John tried with all his being to break the silence, and said, “Why do you speak to them of the God of our fathers?”

“Because I speak in parables.”

“Why do you speak in parables?”

“Because we have the gift of knowing the truth, but they have not that gift.

“Many have eyes, but cannot see; ears, but

JESUS

they cannot hear; a heart, but they cannot understand."

John bowed his head, saying, "Tell me still more."

"Yes. The kingdom of heaven is within ourselves, and he that knows his own self will find it."

He stretched out his trembling hand towards the far distances, murmuring, "You destroy greatness."

"I make it live in all its splendor." And my voice was trembling like a fountain.

"And prayer I set once again in the right path."

John answered, "I am afraid."

I said, "I am not a worker of miracles, and I did not invent the truth.

"It has lain hidden, but it was, is, and shall be.

"It is not I who speak to you, but the divine spirit which is in me, as in all those who are born to the light. I am the watcher set over the spirit.

"And nothing in the course of the centuries to come will prevent the day from transforming

THE DOOR TO THE KINGDOM

the night, nor spring from transforming the earth.

“And nothing shall prevent the true image of all things from being fulfilled in the hearts of men.

“For nothing shall remain hidden and everything shall be proclaimed.

“And on that day we will feel remorse for having been cowards in the face of knowledge.

“And remorse for having obeyed.

“And those who see in the light, shall act in the light.”

* *

But after the days when these things were said, I saw clearly that men, even the best of men, are not capable of understanding the giant human forms of things divine, nor all that is implied when we say that the inward and the outward are but one.

For the need to believe is the need to possess: that is, to take that which is not ours.

And to lust after the impossible.

And in their own miserable souls which turn round and round, they are capable only of say-

JESUS

ing, "If the yoke of God is taken from us, where-with shall it be replaced?"

I have many things to tell you which are still hidden, for you are as yet unable to accept the world of truth.

I said to them only, "Spirit and truth are the same, and we are of the race of God.

"For in the Psalms is this avowal: I have said that ye are Gods, and all of you are children of the most High.

"And each man is his own Christ."

I gave them this only, which is only the first stone, for the day will come, which has not yet come, when it will be known that the man who sees himself has seen God.

And that we are brothers without a father.

Let us begin the work of that day at the beginning.

And let the beginning be with the poor, the humble of heart, the utterly blinded who have eyes.

And hands.

Our task is to undo that which is unjust.

Many hated me. Jehiel especially, having

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been my friend, hated me, and often I found the hand or the face of his hate among my enemies.

And even as I thought, "There can be no compromise with the old doctrines,"

I knew that many were saying of me, "He must be put to death."

CHAPTER XXIV

COMMUNITY

I WENT about preaching the gospel of the spirit and of the poor.

And forming a community in spirit and in works, with John, with Simon Peter, with Andrew, and the others.

For we must begin with something near at hand. We must place the first men on the ground like the first stones, or like seeds, and make them the germs of a multitude. Let us first become small, that we may become great.

And there were several women.

Women have been humbled by men.

The slavery of women has stained even the defeat of the poor.

Because God said to Eve, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."

But the hour has come when each shall be each.

COMMUNITY

And, in the new society of which we were the seedlings that clung to a corner of the world,

Woman was the equal of man.

And the church was not a sect, but ourselves.

And Judas Iscariot kept the common purse, filled by those of us who had been prosperous in the world.

For one is compelled to live by means of money, since this is the law in the world of war and falsehood.

In which we formed a white spot.

With this unjust wealth let us purchase a just life.

But I had no longer a home.

Not even a stone of which I could say that here I was certain to rest my head.

When a man is alone in the world, how shall he keep himself warm?

* *

Once I returned to the village from which I had come.

I returned to my own place.

Other towns, although larger, have less weight.

I easily found all the little things of the past.

JESUS

The well, and the scholars that formed a circle in the marketplace to repeat the sound of words, and my home inhabited and replaced by other people, and my own room which one night in the past, after Priscilla, I found as lonely as myself, and the little window which was the fountain-head of space, and the manger where I was born—and I could no longer understand what I had been.

I who have nothing left but the streets of a village.

I who no longer know what it is to be on the right side of a door.

What have I done with my youth and my strength?

What have I said with this voice of mine that will soon be hushed?

To reality, what have I added that matters, and that will serve men during all days of my struggle?

Something of importance, but not enough.

I have accomplished almost nothing, and I fear the evening.

COMMUNITY

I, who am dismayed by all my anxieties, now blame myself for all that I have not said.

Blessed are those who leave a name that looms like a shepherd in the mist!

And yet the apostle who will some day be the victor, will resemble all those who have been vanquished.

But I shall not be the man.

And even when I have disappeared, will I not be alone?

And I sat down on a stone, the one where I was sitting when love and death spoke to me clearly, once in the past. I saw the great fig-tree which is the head of the village and, above it, the place of stars.

What if I were to lead that calm life a little of which is given to every man, inasmuch as it is the only thing he is given?

To stay here. To have a home, and a regular livelihood.

Always to be a neighbor of the great fig-tree of the market-place, and of the little fig-tree before my door,

JESUS

And of all that I had found again without
having found it.

To have, like others, a wife who would also be
a friend,

And our bodies, easily wearied, resting one
against the other.

And to have children.

One, two, or three.

Instead of crying in the wilderness of cities
which cry louder than we, and are worse than
the wilderness.

And rejecting the denials of men.

Thus I thought, so long as it was day.

But when the shades of evening came, I found
again, in the depths of my childhood, the purity
which was there.

I gathered together the simplicity which is our
treasure.

Lift up your voice! Go forward always, and
try to go everywhere.

And to be the man of men.

Happy are those who are persecuted.

* *

In the morning they came round me, saying,

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COMMUNITY

“Heal the sick man lying before you. And this man also, who is as blind as a post.”

But they said this with rancor and with bitter mouths, and in this village no one had faith in me.

For they knew me too well, and they knew my mother and my brothers, and they had known my father.

And they repeated, “It is Jesus, the carpenter, and what more?”

And they closed their minds with incredulity.

And I could not give the sick man bodily sincerity.

And he remained sick.

But I found the dog which was little when I went away, and he was old, and he could hardly open his eyes that were wounded with age. But as little as he opened them, he recognized me and was wholly filled with happiness. From his first to his last days, he will have hoarded up love for me. Yet I hardly love him now, and his death in me is sadder than the death in himself.

And soon, when this dog will die, his death will

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be as big as life, but there will be only a little mourning, and for that I am sorry.

* *

Mary Magdalene.

She looked at me. She came near, with trembling hands. I said to her, "Do not touch me." She stopped near me, and her arms dropped to her sides.

I was seized with curiosity, and said to her, "Mary, Mary, long ago all those who were with me sought after you, and you did not refuse yourself,

"But to me alone, you refused yourself."

She said, "It was because I loved you."

Then in her childish voice she said, "But now, the evening has come for me.

"I would heal a little, but not the whole, of the weakness of my heart.

"And because it is dark, I would like to go into a desert full of sunshine."

She was dressed in white garments, over which the sunlight poured its angelic whiteness.

And she was seized with the white fire of prophecy, saying:

COMMUNITY

"You will be a help to the needy,

"But I cannot foresee what you will do;

"You will be punished for leading the way;

"Your enemies will strike you down, and you will be denied by your friends;

"Your only succor will come from yourself,

"And from me, poor and lonely, who will help you without helping."

She also said: "You are like a spell that is cast over us, but of this you are ignorant. All the world knows it, save only you.

"When I say *you*, Jesus, you do not know how much I say."

CHAPTER XXV

THE STARS ARE ROOTED IN THE EARTH

IT was during the times of which I speak that one night, suddenly, we grew in stature.

For the skies were opened.

They stood open before us like the Red Sea.

For the stars made rents in the sky as in a cloth, each star in its own rent, and our souls mounted through our uplifted eyes toward all these beings of light. And we saw infinity spread out before us like a marriage feast.

And we were deep as the earth

And some cried, "Hosanna! We see that there is nothing."

These were the words I forced from our dark, blue-spangled group, and they made each of us a garden of stars.

For we saw that the stars were only the end of our glances.

And they were rooted, by us, in our dream.

THE STARS ARE ROOTED IN EARTH

There was one who cried, "We are rising to the heavens."

And I made bold to say, in speaking of the earth, "This is our flesh and blood;

"Since, in rising to the heavens, we cannot depart from our own self, nor from the body of its vision.

"Herein lies the beauty of justice."

* *

When poor Judas, the counter and reckoner, went away from that place, he was bending over as if he were hiding the resplendent treasure of night beneath his mantle; and a man who met him shortly afterwards, while he was still troubled with visions, asked:

"What did he say that changes you so?"

And poor Judas replied in his wonder:

"He said that he was the new God."

CHAPTER XXVI

I DID NOT KNOW

As for me, I did not know what I should do.

CHAPTER XXVII

ISRAEL ALONE

PLANTED on the black circle of this mound which is the pedestal of the clouds, there were gaunt trees like those which winter tears with its teeth.

And these trees were crosses, to which were nailed the tattered remnants of bodies.

But the great vanquished body of the prophet lay stretched on the ground, at the foot of the shambles of torture.

And they stood about his corpse lamenting, with a wild gleam on their faces:

Jairus, Eleazar, Jacob, Simon my disciple, Judah bar Abbas, all of them come down from the mountains and forests of Galilee beyond Jordan, and from the banks of the Jordan. They had been taught by Simon my disciple, who left me one evening to spread the gospel.

For there are three sects in the world: the

JESUS

Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. The mourners belonged to none of these; they were Zealots, whose faces gleam with lightning, and who are children of the thunder.

For their name is Boanerges.

One of them spoke, and told me their story:

“We armed ourselves and set out with him who is Judah bar Judah (he is the one, you know, of whom the Archangel Gabriel announced to his mother Salome that he would ascend the throne of David, for which reason Herod tried to kill him by ordering a slaughter of all the little children). We met with a Roman legion. And we were not their equal in numbers, naturally. He brought down three of the Philistines at one stroke, as was done in times past by Benaiah, Hazael, Ethanan son of Dodo, of Bethlehem, and the other servants of David anointed by the Lord. But he was brought down in his turn. I was able to flee, and returned during the night, in the pitch dark, my hand drowned before me, my feet heavy and fearful, to search for his body, which they had left on the ground.

“The prophetess had said, He will be slain.

ISRAEL ALONE

"This was last night. Here he lies. He forbade us to pay the Roman tax. He drank neither wine nor strong drink. He permitted no man to anoint him, and he abstained from bathing. He was pious, and the skin of his knees was hardened like that of camels on account of his kneeling.

"He was a saint, and he was also a Zealot.

"He was complete.

"He was God's saint.

"Since, when he was born, he was the subject of a special annunciation, like Samson and Samuel.

"And John Zacharias, whose voice goes forth in behalf of our works, like the cloud which is the forerunner of the hurricane.

"Judah is a lion's whelp, said Jacob in the Torah. When he stoops down, with his eyes half-closed and his claws resting on the rocks, who shall rouse him up?"

Then, looking at the ground where lay the unwashed, the rebels said:

"However, he will not remain asleep and dead.

JESUS

The prophecy will be fulfilled. His corpse will rise again to its feet.

“He died violently, like Ezechias, who was executed by the Procurator Herod to satisfy Julius Caesar, like Judah of Gamala, strangled between the Temple and the Altar, and like Zacharias, who was slain in the same place. Like the besieged, who numbered five thousand, and whom the Romans found as five thousand corpses entwined and killed by their own hands; like those who, before the advance of the legion, threw down their women and children from the top of the mountain, and then leaped after them. Accursed be those who make peace with the Romans!”

A Jew, raising his arms in the air like a palm-tree, said, “The bad Jews are the real enemies of the true Jews.”

An old man cried with all his might, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou who slayest thy prophets, and stonest those who are sent to thee, may all the innocent blood which has been spilled on the earth fall back upon thy head, from that of Abel

ISRAEL ALONE

even to that of Zacharias, whom thou hast killed between the Temple and the Altar!"

A Jewess with eyes on fire cried in a wailing voice, "What has become of the son who grew beside my knee? I do not know. Tempests and stormy winds rose up and snatched him from my hands. It is better so. Mary of Bethazor, the daughter of Eleazar, gave the starving Jewish soldiers her own child to eat."

The eyes of all grew big in the night.

* *

And so this prophet will be seen to rise once more, faltering, his eyes still clouded with death, his arms outstretched like one crucified and taken down from his cross, stumbling without his terrible support.

Like Judah of Gamala and Zadok who returned to life; and fire came out of their mouths; and they had the power, so the people said, to seal up the skies and forbid them to rain. Such was the fate of these two anointed, of these two witnesses, whom the Greeks would call martyrs.

And we shall also see his body rise to heaven;

JESUS

and in full daylight, on the ground, we shall see his heels stand clear of his shadow.

Such was the faith of these Zealots; and they added:

“You see those who are lying dead, and those who are gathered round them. Well, in very truth they are the same. You cannot tell the dead from the living. The dead will fight for us, so that our armies cannot be numbered.”

And the horizontal warrior, from the two eyeless hollows of his face, watched the survivors attentively.

In such manner did they speak in the desert, which the wind of nature had partly cleansed of the odor of Herod and his like.

Saying, “The mob is cowardly, and all its memories are fleeting. But we, the Saints, will raise from the dust the courage of Israel.

“And its faith.

“For Israel is the chosen people. The universe was given to the Jews by God, who spoke to them from the top of Sinai, by the mouth of his servant Moses. The house of David was chosen by God to command them, to rule over Judæa

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and all the terrestrial parts of the world, and so to accomplish the covenant made with Moses, the Tables of Testimony engraved by God with his own finger (not once but twice), and to bring victory to the vanquished.

“We, the Zealots, Cananæans, Nazarenes, the inheritors of the Promise,

“Will ensure for the last thousand years of the world, which are just about to begin, the success of the Jews against the Roman usurper, who is the monster with seven heads, and against Caesar, Pontius Pilate, and Antipas the red dragon, who has the face and the red hair of Esau the Edomite, and the ten horns of the Beast.

“And we will rule the nations with a rod of iron.

“We will raise Israel above the Roman eagles. This is how we interpret and live the Written Word.

“And we will march against the eagles and cast them down, as Judah ben Zippori and Matthias ben Margaloth did to the eagle of fine gold which Herod, of the cursed seed of Idumæa, had placed on the Temple. They cast it down in the

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presence of Herod the Great. And when he asked, Who ordered you to do this? they answered, Our holy Torah!

“For men of deeds are the true doctors of the Torah.”

The corpse lay stretched on the ground, its stature that of an archangel, while its empty sockets watched us with the night that was in them. Its mouth also was open, as if to say, Yes.

“He is dead, and for the moment he remains dead,” said Simon bar Judah, turning to me.

“Will you be king of the Jews?”

“For, without you, our revolt might not have taken place.

“For, you have cleansed the lepers and brought light to the blind, and you have even healed the obedient.

“For, I went forth one evening full of you, as you remember, to teach these comrades of mine.

“For, we have heard that you are called the Nazarene, that you have struggled against the rich and toward the kingdom of God, and have spoken for justice, pity, and faith.

“Now, justice is the re-establishment of the

ISRAEL ALONE

dynasty of David, to which it is said you belong. Pity is for the condition of the Jews, and faith is our faith in their revenge.

“What is your answer to this? Be silent! For you have nothing to answer.

“I tell you that we are the true and the only fulfillers of the Law, and of the last struggle for the kingdom of God and for eternal life, which is the immortal glory of the conquering Jew.

“For the name of the Saviour will be surrounded and acclaimed without end by the multitude of the posterity of Israel.

“And there is no other eternity, for heaven is not reflected in the black blood of sepulchres, and the worms will not spew forth the men who passed and were laid away.

“The true Candidate is waiting at the gate, but his deeds will be those of the Seraph whom the Jews call Abaddon, and the Greeks Apollyon.

“If needs be, he will walk upon the sea like the sun, and he will multiply loaves and fishes in order to feed his army with nothing.

“And so, you will be this Candidate.

JESUS

"I beseech you, be the Messianic plague.

"Change water into blood, and turn the earth of the fields into running sores.

"Even if you must slay the rich to enrich yourself, and carry the torch even into the Temple.

"Even if you raise the price of bread, and make a measure of wheat cost a penny, so that there be a famine.

"For famine is the mother of revolutions.

"That you may cause the Word of the Lord to pass over the cities like a wheel.

"Bring not peace, but a sword which will pass through the bellies of the Herods, and the Romans who want us to pay taxes, and the meek ones of the Temple, who wish only to be left in shameful peace.

"And all of whom have changed Judæa and Samaria and Palestine into a new Egypt.

"Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and to God that which is God's.

"As was said concerning the penny of the tribute.

"For this penny is an alloy of silver and copper.

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“And the silver, which caresses, is for God; and the copper, which strikes, is for Caesar.

“Be the lion of the sandy hill, who, when he opens his mouth, utters thunder.

“One is made, they say, to do what is just, and to undo what is unjust.

“For it appears that you said once in a synagogue (I heard you myself with my own ears): The Kingdom belongs at present to the violent.

“Therefore, it will belong to the most violent.

“And there is no other way to lead Israel from its exile in the land of its fathers.

“Be the Moses of Moses.”

In this fashion they repeated some of the things I had said to myself, and this was skilfully done.

These Jews said, climbing one on another to reach me, while their hands made all sorts of gestures:

“Will you be the King of the Jews?”

* *

Their question was full of flesh and of blood, and met me breast to breast.

I answered, “Your revolt is not great enough.

JESUS

"I do not believe in your cause, for you are only a handful, and you do not know the might of Rome, which you make bold to attack, and you run against it one after the other to be slain, and against it you crush out the hope of Israel, which, notwithstanding, is mightier than Rome. And it is wrong to attempt the impossible.

"Moreover, you are led astray by your dream, which is revenge and not justice; the dream of a people, and not of the people.

"For, even if David returned in the form of David, he would not free men from their sorrows. He would bring only the war which breeds war, whether by victory or defeat."

"Can it be," they asked, "that you are on the side of the quibbling Pharisees, the prostituted Sadducees, the narrow and bleating Essenes, or the turncoat doctors who go seeking through their scrawls for reasons to love the Romans?"

"In no wise do I agree with them, but I say that we need a giant to build again the tower of Babel, and to win back the paradise we lost.

"You of the Zealots are not that giant. Where is he to be found?"

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They replied with one voice, "Be that giant." And they pressed me, saying, "You must decide, and throw yourself into action from the top of this mountain, from which one can see the kingdoms of the world."

And this was a Temptation.

But it did not have the proportions of reality.

"I would throw myself into the abyss of all mankind, but not into your well."

They retorted, "Our mission is impossible, you say. Yet we shall attempt it just the same. For, it is by attempting the impossible that the greatest possible can be accomplished."

I said, "This statement is noble only when one is on the right path.

"I do not speak in my name, but in the name of all my fellows.

"Your quarrels about kings no longer concern me.

"For one who can see them in their deep twilight of dust and desolation, men do not wear the color of a country on their skin. And I carry the tattered image of a country the frontiers of

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which are the horizons of the world, and which is not yet, and which is.

"And I do not believe that the whirlwind is Jewish."

* *

I was content to be defeated in their minds, and Simon bar Judah looked at me with hate.

He said to me again, like the blow of a hammer, "They will not understand you, and they will be right."

One evening, in the past, on the road where marchers make a wilderness behind them and before them,

He went away full of me.

At least I believed it, and he believed it also.

But in reality he had stopped short of my gospel.

And, with the others, he drove me away, saying, "You are nothing. Go and preach."

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE BLENDING OF FAITHS

ON the road to Damascus, one day, I met a man who said to me, "I am Paul, your disciple. And I have traveled over the world, since I left you one evening, filled with your word, at the same time as the Simon who betrayed you.

"For the Zealots are brigands.

"They steal and kill to rule, and they will not rule, and they will bring about persecution and captivity."

Then he said, "However, the days have come when the great work of the Greeks and the Romans is tottering on its foundations.

"For, it was only a semblance of order, which hides and legalizes on the surface the disorder of things and the suffering of mankind.

"But a breath, which greatly resembles the breath of the Jews, is going to push all men like a single man against this Greek fabrication.

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"And this breath is life.

"And what power has the surface of the world against the depths of the world?

"Know that there is a new form, which we are preparing, for the religion of our fathers.

"And I say that without you, this new religion might not have come into being."

I asked him, "In what way is it new?"

"By the coming of the Messiah."

"But the Messiah has not come."

He answered, "If he had not come, Israel would have grown weary of waiting and would be lost, or else no matter who might say, I am the Messiah, and this also would be a trap of perdition.

"And besides, the coming of the Messiah is the very substance of the second law which has been revealed to us.

"The Messiah has come, although he will come again for the last time.

"And here is what we see written on the mountains, we men of the new faith:

"The world was lost and doomed to death by the sin of one man, the first Adam, but it is saved

THE BLENDING OF FAITHS

and consecrated to life from this time forth by the blood of one man, the last Adam, sent here by God for that purpose.

“Now, the first Adam was the outward man, the flesh; and the last Adam is the inward man, the spirit.

“And the spirit has lately fallen upon us, the new men, through the channel of grace, so that we might announce this gospel to men, and so that, separating the destiny of their body from that of their soul, we might dazzle them by the future life and by the healing of death, and so that we might say that this gospel supersedes the law of the Temple, and that faith in this replaces all things, even observances, and even works.

“And behold! this will be henceforth the glorious prison of the Messiah.

“For we have known that you, and others like you, have spoken for the spirit, for the inward man, for justice and life, and for the poor alone; against rites and observances, against the rich, against laws that smell of the grave; and that the people have heard this and have loved you

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wherever you have passed, and that you have conquered the heart of the world.

“(And thus you drew me out of myself and you were the cause, and the life, having uttered the cry of the earth.)

“And we have known besides that all this can be deduced from the promises which are written in the Scriptures.

“This is why you will be with us, since the people love you, and need to join their voice with yours, and the living Church must be built in the hearts of the people.”

* *

But I answered, “In this fashion you have built a mighty structure on my teachings.

“And I wish none of it.

“When I speak of the spirit, I mean the spirit, and not an object of worship, something which hovers before the eyes of men; and justice in my mouth is justice and it contains a world of things, and my life is not the dream of the dead, and I have not come to drive out life from life, and I have not come to bleed the tombs, and there is no magic.

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"On the contrary, I have taught the abolishment of dogmas and rituals, the naked truth, duty that wells from the heart as from a rock, and beginning things by ourselves. I have preached the gospel of restitution. I am the one who has no religion, and this is the sole worth of a man whose days are numbered here below."

"There is something new," he said in a louder voice, in order to answer me with more force. "We have placed death under the feet of God, in the words of the Psalms. We have awakened all the dead of mankind!"

"You have revived only the spectre of the sleepers. I will have revived the living."

He answered then, "We need you, to be the flesh of our young Bible, and to raise up the law."

* *

He was frail, and trembling with passion, and seemed to sprout from the earth.

He was full of shouts and inspirations, and of broken bits from Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Psalms. He spoke with bursts of fire, and breathed forth a great genius.

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And he spoke in order to plant within me the seeds of the miracles which he hoped to perform.

"And so, the new harvest is ready," he said.

"It must now be accomplished for the ages of ages.

"It is time to seal the old prophecies with the name of a Messiah.

"It is time to raise the God who shall slay the future.

"He must come in the shape of a man, because the prophets have announced him thus."

I said, "How can any one be God and man at the same time?

"If he is a God who takes bodily form and pretends to be a mortal, he is man in appearance only.

"For only man is human."

He said, "By assuming our nature, God makes us assume his."

I answered, "No."

He answered, "It must be. Man for a little while must be set above the angels, that the word of the Psalms may be fulfilled."

He said, vehemently, "The Messiah must also

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be meekness itself and goodness itself (for we are making an alloy of grace and charity, in order to create new men with this new doctrine, and use it to blend the complaints of the Jews, the frenzy of Orientals, and the reasoning of the Greeks)."

"And where," I asked, "is the living sacrifice, the divine heart that you require?"

And Paul, this idolater of the Dogma, this man who dreamt of the great tomb of a new temple reared above the other, looked at me strangely and said:

"Perhaps it will be you."

* *

At this I laughed.

"You cannot make me your prey, for I have nothing in common with you."

He did not hear me, like all who overflow with their own idea, and he said:

"All men shall be compelled to receive the new dispensation, and to follow the crucified hero.

"He must be a son of David, for so is it written.

"And he must die soon, in order that the great

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Messianic promise of the future may fall upon him, and that we may build on his body.

“He must die that he may be resurrected;

“According to the Scriptures, and also according to the dream that has spread through all the countries of the Roman world, driven by the four winds of the horizon.

“For there are, in the West, the Syrians and the Phoenicians, and in the North the Greeks, and the Babylonians in the East, and the Egyptians in the South, and all these peoples are alike in this, that they believe in a God who shall die and be resurrected in their arms, and that they love this mystery (although they see it only with one eye, being blind in the other).

“And were it not for these preparations throughout the world, our new religion would be only a feeble error.

“We must borrow their baptism of blood, and their communion of flesh.

“And their resurrection.

“Which the Greek philosophers worship with calm, for they call it the immortality of the soul.

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“And we must take all this to our credit as Jews, having created a new blending of faiths.

“For how would I destroy the machinations of the idolaters, if I did not imitate them?”

I said, “Whatever you imitate you do not destroy!”

And also, “The Jews, however strongly they hope for the Messiah, will never believe that he has come.”

Paul: “The cry of the Jews, and also the blood of their lamb, are the leaven in this mixture, but if their nation flinches, it will be left behind.”

Myself: “You are attacking mankind when you make it guilty of one man’s sin. And who are we that we dare proclaim that no man on earth is innocent! The love of God will redeem us, so you say. Such doctrines are the sport of princes.

“And it is not on the model of injustice, which is to say on the model of life, that we should fashion justice. It is to the son of man that justice should be good. Has not this been written? To the son of man, I say, and not to his future shade.

JESUS

"And your formularies give a double depth to the tomb.

"You assail the spirit at its weakest point, that is, the fear of death, and you stone it with stones from the sepulchre, although you pretend with your mouth to replace death by the word 'immortality;' and you make God the accomplice of those who persecute.

"God has said—," Paul shouted.

"This God," I said, "has promised that you would return to dust. It was the serpent who said, Ye shall not surely die. To announce to men that they will not die, is to whisper to the damned on earth the Satanic advice that they should not live their life, and to make them waste the few days that they have—under the banner of a living corpse."

"But," said he, "is not a God who redeems men through his sufferings a beautiful conception?"

I said, "Demagogue!"

"And besides," he added, "if our belief is based on the hereafter, the mighty of the earth

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will not be offended, and they will leave us in peace.”

“You deceive yourself,” I said, “by pretending that your phantom laws are true. You will demonstrate only that the love of men for God is a sentiment contrary to nature.”

His reply was, “This is our reason for calling it supernatural.”

He cried out, saying, “It is written that God shall destroy the wisdom of the wise, and hide the understanding of the prudent. Has God not shown that the wisdom of this world was only folly? And therefore it has pleased him to make the folly that we preach an instrument for saving those who believe in that folly.”

I said, “Sophist!”

From afar, he seemed like a prophet of Israel, but when you approached him the odor of Greek calculation rose from his garments.

“It is forbidden,” I said, “to build the house of justice on foundations that will crumble away to dust when men have opened their eyes.

“For their eyes will be opened.

“They will discover that man’s greatness is

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of man. They will also discover that men's greatness is of men.

"And it is in this manner that the destiny of man and that of men will be one in likeness.

"Your change is not a change, and you are taking great pains for nothing."

He answered, "You know not what you say.

"We must have a fixed law, supported by inexorable ceremonies.

"Which give shape to man.

"And are directed by the leaders.

"The inward mysteries are not seen publicly, and this is the root of the matter.

"We must have visible force and the consent of the kings to make the world march on.

"And nails with which to fasten the earth to the panoply of heaven.

"And we must also have a cross, taken from the Psalms, on which to nail the Messiah!"

He said, having need of my murdered body to take it in his arms, and to make it the center of his mythology:

"Will you be king of kings?"

I said, "Among my disciples there will never

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be found a soldier of kings and of the established order. But among my disciples will be found the soldiers of justice."

And Paul said to me, Jesus, "You know not what you say. I who am at the same time Jew, Greek, and Roman, am stronger than you. Go and preach."

He was of the race of builders.

Who succeed on earth.

He was an immense Pharisee.

CHAPTER XXIX

APOCALYPSE OF THE FUTURE

WHEN he was gone, I wished to be alone. I went into the desert to be apart. I was disturbed by thoughts and under the yoke of a weariness beyond the lot of man.

Both because of the Zealots and because of this doctor of a new faith.

For, this Paul had also, like Simon bar Judah, gone out into the world filled with my word. But he too had failed to understand me.

So that, in sowing the truth, I had scattered falsehood to the right and to the left.

Are these two the only roads that lead to the accomplishment of justice?

And is the Kingdom of Heaven nothing more than Jerusalem raised to a throne?—or nothing more than the inside of a tomb?

And when evening fell, and I stared at the horizon of stones and sand, it suddenly seemed

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that a city was taking shape before my eyes, a city of palaces, gardens, and trees, a city of columns that cast their shadow in pools of living water; and, above the city, a great celestial splendor.

I knew that this was the illusion of wanderers in the desert; that city and splendor were not real, but existed only in my eyes;

That I created and destroyed them both by opening or closing my lids;

That herein lies the proof of the power within us, and that this is what we do incessantly.

For, it requires one's glance to unfold the horizon and fill the bowl of space; and, for the world to live, somewhere a man must breathe.

For, I say that it is man who spreads the blue above us and whose spirit walks on the heights of the sea.

And who moves the mountains into their places when he looks at them.

Whose eye includes the firmament, giving life to Orion, and the Pleiades, and the Bear.

Whose mouth utters the heavens and the earth.

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And in whose heart justice is the slanting torrent which roars toward a horizontal calm.

I know these things.

But you, the others, are only the masons of a mirage.

* *

As the evening was growing deeper, and as nothing could be seen but the sky, I retired to sleep, in a cave where many holy men had taken refuge before me.

And I fell asleep greatly troubled, because of what the renewer of religion had said to me.

And I thought of a superhuman light, and I saw this light ascending in the sky.

I was still sufficiently awake to say, "I am seeing God in a dream.

"As other men have done.

"But unlike the others, I know it is a dream."

The shadows had drawn together again, and in these shadows an archangel took shape, a living being, tall as a mountain, transparent against a luminous background, dazzling in all his outlines; a man like a palace built in the night. I saw the six folds of his wings, striped with the

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pinks and greens of dawn; and his white monumental robe, whose skirts were spread out on the ground like a pyramid of Egypt; and his immense hand that opened vaguely over the heights like a cloud crossing the moon; and, on his half-turned face, the crystal globe of his eye.

From the snowy summit of this angel, a ladder rose whose rungs were drawn-out stars.

All was taken away. The shadows deepened again and, by means of I do not know what sign, I was informed that they were creeping over a battlefield where kings had harvested, and that a river flowed there, warm with blood, and that this formless shadow was taking hideous forms—those of dead men with their frozen gestures, of men who, being dead, refused to sleep.

But the dead were so many that they were piled each in the arms of another.

* *

Like one who flees into an oasis, I took refuge in the great days of Nehemiah.

In the one pure moment of my race.

For it is written, Ask ye of the forerunners.

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But a voice said to me, "Consider again the events which charmed your childhood.

"Ezra was a petty man who said that God dwells in Jerusalem.

"And the crime of Ezra and of Nehemiah was to have put a base idea into the great miraculous force of the repentance of the Jews.

"For they cried out against Israel, not because Israel had done evil, but because the exiles had married the women of the country.

"Their motives were pride and avarice of race.

"And they quenched the great thirst of the Jews with dirty water.

"But this was not all.

"Observing the extraordinary courage of all their people in beginning anew, they took advantage of this courage by instituting a terrible rule of observances, and of obligations of burnt offerings, and contributions to the cult, and tithes, and oblations, in silver and first fruits, to fatten the priests by thousands, and the army of Levites, doorkeepers, singers, and Nethinims, and all the other servants of the House of God.

"This is what they thought to do.

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“And the Jews rose up in rebellion.

“But the machinations of those in power were more lasting than the generations of the Jews.

“The resistance wore away, and children were trained up in servitude, and learned to love the frenzied trumpety of Jewish ritual.

“And they submitted to the yoke.

“For faith obeys.

“And Israel was folded against itself, and its skeleton ruled over its flesh.

“Behold! the one pure moment of mankind.”

* *

Night ceased to blindfold me, and I had the vision of something that rose up toward the clouds, and was cut off: the Tower of Babel, which climbed from earth to heaven and fell back upon itself, and disappeared, and became only the base of the living mountain. My vision crumbled away like the tower itself, the lost paradise of men.

In my dream I cried, writhing on the ground in such thick darkness that I could touch it with my hand, “But the books of the Law!”

Then in my dream I saw the inside of the

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Temple, at night. It was dark, but it was the inside of the Temple.

And a man stole through the shadows to the altar, which was not entirely the altar that we know, for doubtless it stood in the great Temple of the past, in Solomon's temple.

Is the man of the shadows a thief? No, because he has put a book on the altar, and now he is going away.

And yet he is a thief.

For this book has just been written. An army of scribes and priests have concocted it to their own taste. They have gathered the legends and stray proverbs of the Jews, and have tamed them by writing them down, and have added, and loaded, and overloaded, and all to further their own policies.

This book will become the Book of the Law. They will say that it has existed since the beginning of time and has fallen from Heaven. God himself has placed it upon the altar. And they will maltreat and kill those who turn their faces away from the dazzling letters which spell the word, "Revelation."

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And this happened under the second Jero-boam and under Josias.

Also in the time of Ezra.

And Ezra said, "The Torah comes from Moses himself." He said this in the days when the Torah was new, a thousand years after Moses.

"It is not certain," said an angel of darkness, "that the scribes of Israel did not invent the Creation in six days, with the sole purpose of justifying the Sabbath."

And, raising himself on his elbow, this evil spirit howled with laughter as he brought forth his immense blasphemy, which was not, perhaps, a blasphemy.

And I discerned near a pillar of the temple, bending over his table, the scribe in a long robe who created the Creation of the World.

And in the darkness there was a lighted candle; and the fingers of a man's hand appeared, writing before the candle:

"The books of Daniel and of Enoch are neither of Daniel nor of Enoch."

"Know ye," cried a voice, "that in the Holy

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Scriptures, the prophecies have been fabricated according to the events.

“Know ye,” and the voice rose higher still, “that there will be new holy books, in which events will be fabricated according to the prophecies.”

And I heard singers round about me, singing:

“Glory to Jesus, son of Mary, son of David, son of God!”

* *

At these words I saw an apocalypse of the future unrolling itself through space.

And the man of the Damascus road was mingled with all this.

Once more I saw doctors and scribes, pontiffs, hermits, churches, councils, all of them functionaries of a throne, all of them disputing in a space enclosed by walls.

And the voice explained, “They busy themselves with thee.

“They are making a code in which thy life is nailed to immutable texts, in which thy face is disfigured, in which thou art chained on all sides to ancient prophecies and evil doctrines. Al-

APOCALYPSE OF THE FUTURE

though thou hast said, There is no mediator, they make of thee a Mediator incarnate. They stone thee with thy name.

“Thou hast destroyed the idol of Israel, and hast left only the great human framework of justice, but the man of the Damascus road hath put another god in the empty place.

“Instead of filling it with life.

“And the law of Moses and the fables of the Greeks will enter one into another, and will make of thee a shambles, for thy body will be crushed in their midst, and thou wilt be only the rain of thy blood.

“Thou wilt never know all that will be done with thee, and even now that I tell thee, thou dost not know.

“And there will be none to defend thee, and the disciples of thy disciples will cry, Amen.

“O ye that walk the streets and labor in the fields, poor people without number, ye have little knowledge of the plots that are woven in the high places. And ye live in peace, having no suspicion of the conspiracies against you.

“And it will be the poor, and the disinherited,

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that will breathe into this doctrine torn from the flesh of Jesus, and will make it the living force of the world.

“Because they will have seen and embraced only the misery of a giant made in their likeness. Those who overflow with suffering will love the king crowned with thorns.

“They will not try to understand the mad idea that a God can be a man, and a man a God. They will love this idea blindly, with a maternal love.

“But when this doctrine is firmly established, with its God nailed to the cross, it will become the support of the rich and of the persecuters.

“Everywhere, always.”

* *

I uttered a cry as I lay among the stones, there on the battlefields of reality, in that hour of night when men and nations have vanished from their place, and the darkness pursues us, and I tried to shout into the distance, “Do not believe in Jesus!”

But my strength was not equal to these words, and I was forced to listen further:

“Those who resemble thee, and will be thine

APOCALYPSE OF THE FUTURE

own self resurrected, will be condemned and killed by thy Church, wherein thou wilt be a stranger. Beware of those who will speak of themselves as Nazarenes, or as the Poor.

“And religion will have taken everything from the poor, who were its real mothers, and will have stolen itself from the unfortunate.

“It will plunge them more deeply into the dregs of the earth, and will take away light and joy.

“It will be a religion with two faces.

“Which will do evil on earth, but will say under heaven, repeating the great lesson which thou hast taught, Listen to my good tidings!

“And it will rouse the anger and detestation of the just.

“Who will be defeated throughout the centuries.

“Like thyself.”

CHAPTER XXX

SERMON IN THE TEMPLE

ALL the world was covered with a veil of sunshine, and filled with joy, when I entered Jerusalem to meet the people, as I had promised.

I was riding on the foal of an ass, and my disciples were waving palms, and the people came running toward us, asking, "What is it?" and all seemed happy to see me.

And my dark dream was dispersed, because of the largesse of the sun.

And a blind man sitting on a stone, asked what was going on, and then, turning his face a little toward me, with its invisible shadow, called upon me in a loud voice; and a man covered with the snows of leprosy succeeded in reaching me, thanks to his horrible armor, and another blind man, touching me with his hands, transmitted his anguish, saying, "I have a whole world behind me."

SERMON IN THE TEMPLE

When we reached the Temple, I saw the chiefs of the sacerdotal race and the senators of Israel already assembled.

And, further away, there were Roman faces.

And seeing these men, the words of the man of the Damascus road returned to my mind.

And they all were moved with envy against me, and I was moved with anger against them, for all evil comes and will come from them.

They dared say nothing, being hemmed in by a stormy sea of people.

And turning round, and seeing the multitude which faced the ranks of the mighty, I was moved with compassion, because the people were scattered and strayed like sheep without a shepherd.

And I said to those who were with me:

"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few.

"For the people are springing from the earth like the seeds which they have planted, and like the fruit of their labors.

"But each man is separated from the others.

"And the crowds are not crowds, but a myriad of atoms."

JESUS

John said, "It is the part which makes the whole."

I answered, "Yes, but it is the whole which makes the part."

And I reflected that the movements of human masses are heartrendingly slow. The heavy penalty of crowds is their slowness.

They could do all things if they had the will.

And they would have the will, if they knew. But, I tell you, the achieving of knowledge is delayed and repulsed, and this is the nightmare of the whole world.

And so, hating their sufferings, hating their greedy masters, hating what Paul had said to me, and that which had been told me by the leaders of the blind and wasted rebellion.

I thought:

"I must give up my life."

* *

I had already thought of this: To raise myself up before the world as a sacrifice; to offer my death as a symbol. To display the wounds of my body so that the scattered people might make one body.

SERMON IN THE TEMPLE

I had tried gropingly to be the prince of deeds, and now my dying was the greatest deed that I could perform,

To awaken the dead, and to wring, from my defeat, a victory.

The moment for this had come;

The moment to show forth my blood.

In the Temple there were money changers and merchants. I cast myself upon them, I overturned their tables and their chairs, and drove them from the Temple in the presence of the people, crying out:

“This was the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.”

And the people clamored approvingly about me.

And I also drove out the beasts of sacrifice, and those who sold them and led them, crying:

“The Temple has become a vast shambles, managed by a caste.”

And the people, at this moment, believed it.

The priests and senators, to whom my gestures were a blow in the face, and who were assailed by the cry of the people, kept silence.

JESUS

But I knew well that having said and done these things, I should not last much longer.

* *

But the Romans were still indifferent.

And I said to this city that lived and moved before me:

“Cast off your chains, whoever will.

“What are you waiting for to rouse your anger?

“And to make you say, to those who rule over you for their own profit, By what right?

“And to change evil into good?

“I have heard those who said, Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

“They were false prophets, stealers of dreams, and thieves of hope.

“For, this is delivering the good into the hands of the wicked.

“For, these prophets were trying to sacrifice you to a doctrine which says, Be good! in order not to say, Let us be just!”

And I, the sacrificed, cried out to them, “Do not sacrifice yourselves.

SERMON IN THE TEMPLE

“Whosoever sacrifices himself is not good enough.

“Whosoever lets himself be killed is a murderer. They know well, the reapers of hope, that goodness here below can only be the phantom of goodness, and that the wicked will not take wings and fly away. To sacrifice yourself means not to understand yourself.

“The great voice of Daniel, which dominates the others like the dome of the thunder, and Isaiah and Jeremiah and all the spokesmen of the Eternal, have only justice in their mouth.

“Justice is reality and blood and source, like the heart, which is the body of the body. It does not speak of love; it says ‘respect;’ it says ‘light.’

“And in so saying, it blends Heaven with earth and truth with the people.

“When they speak so much of goodness, it is only to free themselves of justice, to mobilize you in the clouds, and to prevent you from ever changing war into peace and evil into good.

“For, said Nehemiah, the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and so builded; and he that sounded the trumpet was by me.

JESUS

I saw in the multitude John Zacharias, the forerunner, who had returned from his prison, and encouraged by his presence, I cried out:

"It is written, I have put my words in thy mouth, and have this day set thee over the nations, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy.

"If you have enemies, make war against them.

"But recognize them first.

"They are not those you think.

"They are not the foreigners and the Gentiles."

At which a man of the Levites said, "He is speaking for the uncircumcized."

And Jehiel cried, with his fist outstretched against me:

"You commit the national sin!"

But John Zacharias, who was standing between the crowd and me, lifted his arms and answered him:

"What do you mean by the national sin? Where would you place it in the list of sins?"

I said, "There are only two human truths. They are *each* and *all*.

SERMON IN THE TEMPLE

“On earth no man of the poor is foreign to any other man of the poor.

“If the poor truth could speak, would it not say, I have no country?

“Hearken to the words of Isaiah: I will make thee a light to the Gentiles. Thus saith Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, to him whom man despiseth, to a servant of rulers.

“And the prophets who have confessed the Eternal have extended the Law over the entire world.

“Who would dare, after them, to lessen it,

“And to give all sorts of alien and hostile names to the truth?

“Your real enemies, those whom you must some day conquer, are the rich and the mighty.

“Behold your foreigners and your Gentiles:

“They are those who reap where they have not sown, and who burden the shoulders of others with burdens they would not even touch with their fingers, and the hems of whose garments are stained with the blood of innocent souls.

“To all them that have shall be given, and they shall have abundance; but from them that have

JESUS

not, even that which they have shall be taken away.

“And desolation shall be rained on the heads of the desolate.

“But those who do not work have no right to eat.

“It is written in the Book of Enoch: Accursed are ye that build your palaces with the sweat of others.

“And money, if it lives and spawns, is a monster.

“And, in the community of workers, the community made by them and for them,

“From which war and unjust wealth will disappear,

“Each will be the equal of each.

“The mighty will be put down from their seats, and those of low degree will be exalted.

“Let the greatest among you be your servant.

“In the ages to come, I can see the mightiest man of all, rising up among a great people to be its servant.

“For, in such a community, each will obey only himself.

SERMON IN THE TEMPLE

“And all will be free, to be the slaves of justice.

“I tell you that to-day there is only one country where the unfortunate are united. That country is the grave.

“You are sleeping to-day among the corpses, but when you have awakened, you will find yourselves side by side.

“You will see that you are walled in prisons, as in ruinous tombs, and that all of you are brothers in misfortune.

“Therefore, cast off your chains, whoever will!

“Do not wait to be dead to be like us!”

* *

John Zacharias, rising to his full height, pointed at me and cried:

“It is He!

“It is He. I have preached the gospel to the poor,” said John, “but he has the words of eternal life. He has arms of light. This is the divine Lamb, who redeems the sins of the world.”

* *

In the midst of the ardent silence of the multitude, I cried out like Isaiah:

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JESUS

"The people have been seated in darkness, but now they see a great light.

"And now they are hungry to see.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled. And I announce the age of accomplishment, when at last it shall be a joy to suffer for the truth.

"But do not return into the hands of evil shepherds.

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened.

"And as long as you have not everything, you will have nothing.

"The spirit of Eternal Justice has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, and to say to the captives, Come forth!"

A man of the people cried out to me, "We are waiting for the Revolution."

"Then, you are waiting for yourselves.

"Strike at your masters, O men whose hands have fashioned all things, even your own torments.

"But follow not Judah the Galilæan, nor Zadok, nor any of that sort.

SERMON IN THE TEMPLE

“Beware of the wars waged by the too weak against the too strong.

“But from being weak, prepare yourselves to be strong. United, you are strong.”

And I rendered justice to the Zealots, saying:

“For the greed of a race will never heal the misfortunes of mankind.

“Give man to man, unite man with man, build the great mountain of men.

“The chains will fall of themselves, when there is none left in chains but a single giant.

“First bring about a revolution in your minds.

“The revolution is of the spirit.

“Because it consists in changing that which is, into that which is right in the eyes of the spirit.

“And know that there is only one truth, and that whatever is right in the eyes of the spirit will some day come to pass by the force of events.

“But of that day and that hour, no man knows.

“Life, life!

“For yonder are the mighty, and here the multitude of the poor; and verily I say unto you that the glory, and the fortune, and the joy of those,

JESUS

are made of the shame, the misery, the distress of these.

"He that lives by the sword can perish only by the sword.

"The sword is your tool.

"Force shall decide between those and these.

"Force should be on the side of the right. Wherefore, O righteous, take force if you have it not.

"Without force, something is lacking to the creative marriage.

"Force is the female of the spirit.

"And those who sleep in the dust of the earth, and are dead with sleeping, or cry out weakly in their dreams, shall waken.

"When we shall have put away the abomination of desolation.

"The just shall be in numbers like the barbarians whom the earth can no longer contain. They shall be one people, and in sweat and blood they shall remake the unity of God.

You are fools not to rebel, but you shall become the wise,

"And the good!"

SERMON IN THE TEMPLE

And the people of the Jews cried out in the marketplace.

And their cries were not empty.

For the archangel of wrath came out of their mouths.

And such a murmur of love rose toward me from the people that no one could have harmed me at that moment.

But I saw the pale statues of the mighty, the masks of Roman and Jewish faces, and there I read that the end of my life was written.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE PRACTICAL TREASURE

My disciples and I assembled our church for the evening meal, and we knew without saying that this was our last meal together (though it proved to be the one before the last).

I broke the bread, and first there was a silence for this gift.

Then Simon Peter raised his voice and said to me, "You are the prince of life."

I answered, "You shall be my disciples indeed. You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Nathanael said, "You mean that we do not know it completely?"

"No, not completely."

He grew bolder, and questioned me, "Are you not opposed to love? Answer."

James, also growing bolder, said, "The heart of man must be changed."

THE PRACTICAL TREASURE

The door of weather-beaten wood was open to the room where the table was set, and through this great square we could see the sky, to which the setting sun had given a greenish cast. Light entered the room in broad sheets.

And notwithstanding the beauty of things, I answered, "What do you wish us to do with your dream?

"You hold it in your fingers like a flower, and it makes you lovelier, but in reality you hold nothing.

"You are worthy enough with your flower, but the one who understands and sees, is braver and more honest than you."

And I also said to James, who listened to me with his whole heart, bowing his head and looking at the table, where the bowl between his hands was gilded with evening light:

"To change one's heart? No. For it cannot be done.

"It is not the heart, but what is within the heart, that should be changed.

"And this is why I tell you to understand and love one another;

JESUS

"Those who are here and those who are not here.

"This is the one and only commandment, and it is the one which I give you.

" 'Understand' is a living word, and the flesh of this word is love.

"It is evil to love before understanding. For one must not begin building the house from the top. Understand first, then love.

"For love without reason is a floating thing at the mercy of the winds of the earth.

"And which can turn to evil.

"And the heart cries like a man without a tongue.

"If you believe at the same time in love and intelligence, do not say, love and intelligence. Say, the love of intelligence.

"But reassure yourselves. Understanding does not exist without love. And if there is nothing great which does not lie within the great lines of justice, then also there is nothing sweet and warm which is not held in the great arms of pity. And reason is upright, but it is more foolishly great than folly.

THE PRACTICAL TREASURE

James raised his grave face and his lips moved:

“Why do you always say pity instead of love?”

“Because it is all that is upright and pure in love.

“It is the love which sees.

“To love men is to see them as they are, and to depend on them, and to have them depend on you. Such is the love of men: light, measure, utility, light.

“One must cling only to what is feasible. But to this one must cling.

“Let our words be workers.

“Nothing can be done to combat the fleeting misery of one’s own heart, which is intangible.

“Everything can be done to combat the approaching misery of all, which is a weighty burden.

“And which therefore can be carried.

“And though lonely hearts can only grope toward one another, the hands which grope toward all the others will some day touch them.

“Your joy, your suffering, are changeable and deceiving. But the suffering of mankind will not betray you ever.

JESUS

"Do not say, I would change man into an angel, and the world into a garden of Eden. For you will be answered, What road will you take? Neither say to the blind, I am telling you of the light. For they will cry, We want the substance of light!

"Say: My task is arranging the things which are assembled here below.

"And in the same way, do not speak of happiness. It is better to say, 'peace.'

"But you will have against you all the mighty, and the force of enthroned religion, which was designed long ago to fight against you, and all the powers of the world.

"You will be hated and persecuted. And the brigands in power will say of you, These men are brigands; and the liars will say of you, These men are liars. And even poor people who are neither brigands nor liars, will repeat the same of you.

"And your kingdom is not of this world.

"But it must be builded there.

"For it is of this world, but not of this time.

THE PRACTICAL TREASURE

"I leave you, but I will give you another comforter: the spirit of justice, which the world cannot as yet receive, not being able to see it.

"The spirit will lead you in all truth."

* *

"What is the proof of justice?" said Didymus.

I answered, "This is my flesh, this is my blood.

"This is the great river which flows through the veins of the multitudes.

"My blood is the blood of others.

"Such is the proof of justice.

"Be ever new, and as men born again into this world which hates you.

"Whatever I do, others can do also, for like me the others are witnesses of the truth, and capable of bearing witness.

"For there no magician is required.

"They need walk neither to the right nor to the left of their interest as men.

"And if there were left only one sacred thing in the world, it would be this interest.

"I do not call you my servants, because the servant knows not what the master does.

JESUS

"And when I shall be no longer with you, my children, you will think much of me.

"That you may not be orphans."

* *

Simon again raised his voice,
Saying only, "You will change the world, and it will indeed be changed."

The disciples were sad, but they were also filled with joy and the holy spirit.

James spoke to me like Jacob:

"I saw your face as if it were the face of God." And he said again like Jacob, "I have seen you face to face, and my soul has been delivered."

And I remembered how sweet it was, in my youth, when I met my friend.

From the moment that I chose him and he chose me (he and I, the left and the right), the word was made flesh.

And two smiles which smile at each other are something set apart from the world.

So is it now with the one heart of my disciples, which has given the joy of life to my thoughts. And when, reunited, they shall think as I think,

THE PRACTICAL TREASURE

our common word will be made flesh. For there is something more than presence.

And I, whose minutes of life were numbered, said to my disciples, "Live!" There is hope only for him that is joined to the living, said Ecclesiastes. For, said he, a living dog is better than a dead lion.

And the sky, which was framed by the doorway, was pink, and the birds were singing.

To understand. The peace of the spirit is as beautiful as that of the heart.

And is its mother.

We will shortly understand the purity of the lines which go from each to all,

And the value of life,

And the place of a rose with its breath,

And the place of a nightingale in the night,

And that the sky is woven to the earth;

And will understand miraculously

The miracle of day and of simplicity, for the day and the night do not deceive us,

And all the marvels we can do in a single day,

And the beauty and horror of death.

* *

JESUS

About nightfall, in a corner, I saw Jehiel.

The friend who had become a foe, recognised me, trembled, and bowed his head.

I stopped in front of him, at which he looked at me a little. And I saw that he did not dare to throw himself into my arms.

I said to him, "So, it is you."

His whisper answered me softly, "Yes."

And having pronounced these words which say all that can be said in the world, and having placed ourselves for all time, we separated.

CHAPTER XXXII

BEHOLD, A MAN

ALL day nothing was done against me.
The sky was blue, the fields were radiant.
But it was too late for me to enjoy them.

And the evening came as before. And when it was there, I said to myself "It is to-night that all will be consummated."

As I walked heavily, not knowing what to do, for I had too little time before me, I saw Judas Iscariot.

He was in a gloomy mood, full of rancor, grinding his teeth.

As soon as he saw me, he said:

"I have something against you.

"I am annoyed by something you said in your sermon in the Temple, and before that in your sermon on the mount; I mean by what you said about the people's having to fight their own battles.

JESUS

"Lord, you would have done better to keep silent. Or to talk of something else. See here, I have been thinking the matter over, and it is just as I say. For your own good, listen to my words and reflect on them, Rabbi.

"Do not mix Caesar with your gospel. Speak of the spirit and let Caesar alone."

I said, "Friend, it is not fitting to speak of one and be silent about the other."

He said, "What of it? It will not be noticed at first. Let us take a middle course, or at least keep safely on the side."

I understood more fully than before that the gravest temptations are those which do not appear as such, and that this man was far away from me and against me, though not ill-disposed.

Because he is concerned with the small affairs of the moment, and always seems to be right.

When he stands there, it seems to me that the whole world is gathered there against me.

I said once that it was like running against a tree.

No, it is as if, in the night, I ran against the forest.

BEHOLD, A MAN

My anguish increased a hundredfold, a thousandfold.

Then, in despair, I became like a child, and called for my mother, and my steps led me in search of her.

She was with some friends in Bethany.

In the village, the tranquil life of the day was ending. They had all been busy since the dawn. Now they were returning, each man into his own place, content with his toil. The odor of their gardens came out to meet them. They said to the evening wind, Give!

Evening is the best season of the day.

And each thing is lovelier than the next.

I love it all.

But I was the winter and carried the winter with me; for each man, every hour, remakes the world in his own image.

All things seemed clothed with beauty. But their beauty was only the charity of the passer-by.

And night is to close your eyes.

And nevertheless, it would require many calm

JESUS

years to age the light which bathes these households.

But everything they enjoy is ended for me.

I shall not walk here again, nor there. I have reached the moment when every step says, Good-bye!

And there I saw an old man come slowly down a stairway. He will go up again. He who descends into the grave will not rise up again.

In one house, behind the curtain of the door, a happy song was spreading its perfume of immortality.

The deep house, with all its openings closed. For those who live inside, it is a thing. For those who pass, is it not a creature? And, because it has rained, this wall has wept.

A young girl came to meet me. But because I went away, she also went away.

Here, where some one was working late, I could see a light burning. It made the square house and the palm tree seem blue.

How blue was all the world!

I love.

My God, my God!

BEHOLD, A MAN

Thinking of my days, which will have passed so soon, I childishly let slip the words, "My God!"

It was my mouth and my regret which spoke, in spite of myself.

* *

I found my mother sitting at her work, and spoke to her of great matters. "Listen: I have pitted myself against the world."

She put off, with painful efforts, the humbleness of her nature, and finding herself embarrassed by speaking of such things, she blushed.

She even dropped the vessel in which she was preparing food.

And she said, "One shouldn't be different from the others. People are beginning to find it strange that you complain of everything which takes place.

"Doubtless, when people are listening to you and shouting Hosanna, you are proud.

"But there are others who say that you aren't a good Jew."

As I said nothing and the moments passed, she took a pot she had placed on her knees and

JESUS

began rubbing it with her roughened fingers, so as not to lose time, because evening was here and the meal must be made ready.

She said, "It would be nice if people would say, Mary, you are the mother of Jesus, an honest carpenter whom nobody talks about.

"Instead of this, my son, they say, That fellow Jesus is a man without a country. He has no respect for rank and property. He is a communist.

"I don't know, personally, but this is what they say.

"Let things be as they are. They are all right, I assure you on my word. Obey your elders."

She looked at me, to convince me, with shining tears on her eyelids.

And I was helpless, because of my great anguish, before the woman who gave me all I have.

I did not choose my mother. What have we in common, she and I?

She is the woman whom I have seen face to face, and this is all that we have in common.

My mother bows her frail shoulders.

BEHOLD, A MAN

The patience of her kisses would soften the stones.

Instead of replying, I thought of passing the garden of Ananias, and of seeing the graven Ashtoreth with its little gilded child that had tempted her one day.

And, drawing a comparison between the frail artificial beauty of the goddess, perfect in its immobility, and the poor maternity of my mother, with her drowned eyes where the stars had taken root, I began to murmur, "The goddess Mary;" and, in my anguish, I smiled very faintly.

* *

When I said good-bye, her face was already stained with the night. I took the road to Gethsemane, and the people of the village faded away, died, and the cry which a little while since had begun to well from my throat was completed: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

And this was a temptation that came from the Great Books.

It was breaking the bonds of a fatherhood which we cannot escape seeing: my Father. . .

JESUS

My Father, who art in Heaven, thou echoest
back the sound of our sorrows.

And I knew then why we believe in God.

If I were mad, I should believe in God.

* *

The moon was at full over the Mount of Olives,
and in the barn where my disciples were huddled
in the straw, there was a square of light from a
hole in the roof.

And it was dark all about, but one could see
the mass of their sleeping bodies.

I touched them and they awoke reluctantly.

Of what had they been speaking before they
fell asleep? They did not answer me at first, but
at last they confessed that they had been arguing
as to which of them would be greatest in the
future.

They knew of my approaching death; they had
communed with me in farewell; and they had
spoken of this.

And afterwards they had fallen asleep, tired
with having lived through a day.

They rubbed their eyes, and fell back into
sleep with all their weight as men, lying at the

BEHOLD, A MAN

edge of that whiteness which, on earth, was the end of the moon's light.

Might they not have kept watch with me that night?

My worst enemies are these honest men of short vision. They have tried with all the power that is in them to model their words on mine. But they will betray me because of their mediocrity.

Simon Peter himself will deny me. He will deny me in front of others. And even when he is by himself, some evening he will deny me. Nevertheless, he will be fearful of what people have made him think, and that evening he will look toward me. And I shall not be near him. And, because he does not hear me, that evening, in his own room, he will think that I am listening to him. He will be afraid, and for him I shall be everywhere, save in the place where he stands.

And John, the one that resembles me most, the man whose glances seem to mirror back my own, and who often watched me with his eyes lifted and his head bowed down, even John will betray me, and he will not preserve my memory.

JESUS

To the truth invisible I have given the only thing that I possess: my life. And now, my life is no longer mine.

And thinking of this I wept, in the barn where I was alone.

And having fallen on my knees, I saw my two clenched hands, for a man stricken with anguish does not see the suffering of his face, but only of his hands.

* *

Meanwhile another disciple, one to whom I had never paid much attention, was watching near the wall; and at first I heard only his voice in the shadows, saying to me, "I have not slept."

This young man came out of the shadow. He bowed down before me in the square of light, and glorified me by saying in a whisper:

"I adore you because you are not a God. If you were a God, what would it matter that you suffered a few hours and seemed to die? If you were a God, all this would be of little importance in your eternity of radiance, and what man in his senses would speak of your sacrifice?

"If you were God, what virtue could you

BEHOLD, A MAN

claim? Your sacrifice would be only a divine game.

“And I ask pardon, of you that are so great, and so exposed, and will not be resurrected, because I misunderstand you, and because, at times, I considered you a God.”

* *

Mary Magdalene also was there, white in the darkness, lovely as the day, and her beauty was naked of jewels.

She was raised by a great exaltation to the tips of her toes; and for many weeks people had been saying that seven devils had entered into her, as before.

She told me who I was:

She said: “There came a man who grasped the suffering, the misery, the greatness of men,

“And bore them up in his hands, that all might see.

“You have announced the things that were hidden since the beginning of the world.

“This is the seed you have sown: To believe fully in ourselves, to remake life in our image, and we shall be saved.

JESUS

"Let each man master his God, you have said,
and let all men master their kings.

"And you have deified.

"And you were adored by me with my whole
being, and not alone with the body which is my
outward garment.

"I was hidden from you as my heart is hidden
in me. For, without speaking a word, you asked
that I suffer.

"I am the monument of him that spoke to me.

"And may your light shine forth!"

* *

When this woman fell silent, and I heard her
voice no longer, I knew that I had spent my life
to gain this one disciple.

And her I possessed only through the magic of
her heart.

And perhaps also this other who had not
wished to spoil the beauty of regret, and who
drew near and said, stretching toward me her
arm as blue and pale as the moon:

"Here is the man of men.

"Behold, a man!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

JUDGES

THE soldiers came to find me as I had foreseen,

Without my being a prophet.

And yet, the poor soldiers lifted their hands against themselves, as always.

My disciples fled away in a panic.

The nucleus of the Church, the source of the new world, was dispersed.

And I heard one of them say, "I do not know this man," and I did not turn my head to see who it was.

And I was shut up with the priests and overlords, they and I, between four walls.

And there sat in this tribunal: the pontiff with his load of jewels, and the rich man in royal garments, and the soldier crowned with glory, and the brutal liar, and the sweet-voiced sophist that twisted like a snake—all of whom wore bracelets,

JESUS

and rings in their ears, and all of whom were one body and one force.

They went through the form of examining me. They paid no attention to what I said, but replied to their own questions.

And they claimed that I had formed a conspiracy against the State.

And I kept silence, and ceased even to judge my judges.

Then they pushed me outside, to face the Roman official.

As this was during the time of preparation for the Passover, the crowd was not allowed to enter into the tribunal. And from time to time, being thrust violently to the threshold of the door as it swung open, I could see a river of tumult overflowing the marketplace.

The official thought only of his responsibility as an official, and said, "Let us see, what crime has this man committed?"

They answered, "He has roused the people, and moreover, he said that he was king, when there is Caesar."

The official, with a look of annoyance, said to

JUDGES

me, "Poor prophet, let them once speak of Caesar, and I should be in trouble if I did not condemn you."

I was convinced that this great dignitary wished my destruction, but he was a hypocrite and a coward like all those in power.

Now the crowd had the right to free one prisoner, but prompted by the priests, it chose to deliver Judah bar Abbas rather than me, for he also had been imprisoned.

After he had settled the matter by pronouncing my sentence, the Roman official led me to a corner and said in a low voice, while his cold eyes stared at me, "The king of the Jews is nobody I take seriously. More than that of any king, I fear your desperate reign."

While the crowd looked on, they dressed me in a robe of purple and a crown of thorns; they gave me a reed for a sceptre. They said, "Aha, he is king of the Jews," and struck me with their open palms, and laughed, and prostrated themselves before me.

And I remembered the man of the Damascus

JESUS

road, according to whose word my glory was beginning.

I thought that the rulers of the world would one day treat me like the rulers of the Jews, when my image and my name would be resurrected among them.

They will dress me in robes of purple, and give me the sceptre.

They will give me a crown which will hurt my head.

They will prostrate themselves before me.

And they will mock me and strike me.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE CROSS

THE crucifixion.

How frightened I was, a moment beforehand.

It hurt me and wrenched me terribly.

My blood was flowing, and I was thirsty for my blood.

But I could still see before me.

And I saw that there were not many people.

But all were against me.

And if I had friends there, they did not dare to be friends.

The other day, all were with me, because I dominated them.

But the mob had veered with the wind.

For they worship only those who dominate them. Faith can be found where power is found.

But I, the man stretched out in the shape of a

JESUS

cross, have faith in them nevertheless, though to-day they know not what they do.

And persecute themselves with ingratitude.

To do what is just. To undo what is unjust.

After I am gone the Jewish people, whose soul I have held erect, will aid me in sowing this leaven in the universe, when that people itself will have been sown to the winds, in the midst of the one people under heaven.

When they will have become the scattered disciples of misfortune, which, till now, has been the only great shepherd of the peoples.

I am crucified and I shall die on the cross.

My thought will also be crucified.

But it will not die on the cross.

O spirit of man, bright as an angel and rebellious as Satan!

I love you. And I love them.

The poor, who are all men, and are nothing at all,

But a force of nature,

Lost like that of the wind!

By a bloody covenant,

I will write my words on their heart.

THE CROSS

And I, who am crucified upon this cross,
And who will be the antichrist of crucifixions,
I, the divine beast of sacrifice, whose body is a
red flag, can see a war that will now be waged to
the end, an open warfare between the flesh of
humanity and the greed of a few great con-
spirators,

The very ones who have nailed me to this cross,
Because I was the Messiah of the people and
the Word of Men.

For, since the world has been a world, they
have been fighting a great counter-revolution
on the earth.

But those who were last, on account of the sin
of obedience, shall be first, after too much misery.

And they will be divinely right.

I can still see this.

In my closed eyes.

Before I drown.

And here is the cry that rings within me, within
my torn mouth:

“O people, I believe in your last Judgment;

“When you shall hold the naked gospel.

“O people, when you shall become the people.

JESUS

"When I was living I told you that I came not to bring peace, but a sword, because true peace lies on the other side of a war, and of a deluge.

"It was because I belonged to life that I came to bring a sword, and to make a division between father and son, between brother and brother, between master and servant, in order to seal the new alliance.

"Against all the princes of the earth,

"Rise up, ye damned of the earth.

"Hear, O people, for my sufferings are beyond me. See, O people, the blood of the new alliance, in which blood I founder." I have opened my mouth above this blood of my entrails, and they have heard my blood-drenched cry:

"I have conquered the world!"

And this is the moment when my head falls forward on my breast, and the skies are rent with my cry.

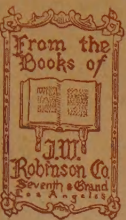
* *

The end of the gospel of Jesus, son of Mary.

May he come to your aid, all you that are tormented, all you that seeking a force in the certainty of moral laws, despairing overmuch of

THE CROSS

human omnipotence, still grope toward Gods in the skies, listen to the words of the passing wind, and beat your heads against the bars of light and the ceiling of the sky; and to your aid also, all you that in your ranks to-day, when almost all the nations of the world are ruled by hypocrites, are sowing the pure, wise, and just idea of the Revolution in the great soul of humanity. So be it.



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